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THE BRAVE HEARTS ON THE GALLANT OLD UNITED STATES SICKENED AT THE SIGHT. THE PIRATE'S DOOM HAD BEEN AWFUL.

The Two Midshipmen;

OR,

THE YOUNG CORSAIR-CHASER'S FIRST CRUISE.

A Romance of the Old Frigate, United States, in the Barbary War.

BY T. J. FLANAGAN,

AUTHOR OF "MIDSHIPMAN DARE," "THE CRUISE OF THE OCEAN QUEEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A BOY AND A BRUTE.

ON a bitter, snowy night, in the winter of 1800-1801, a man and a boy were making their way through the lower part of the City of New York toward the water front.

I have said making their way, but that is not the proper mode of expressing it, for the man was dragging the boy along by the arm, stopping every now and then to strike him.

"Run away, will ye? How d'ye like that?"

"That" was a brutal kick which the man dealt the boy, while holding him at arm's length.

"Stop that, you brute!" exclaimed a voice from behind, and the next instant the boy was snatched from the grasp of his astonished companion.

The latter uttered an angry oath as he turned on the intermeddler.

"Curse you! I'll break—" he began, raising his clinched fist, but at the sight of the brass buttons shining underneath the half-open great-coat, stopped short, growling:

"Can't a man chastise his own son?"

"Perhaps. It depends whether he does it as a man or a brute."

"Well, he's mine, anyhow. Come here, you young rip!"

"Oh, please, sir, don't let him take me!" implored the youth. "He'll kill me! I know he will!"

Street-lamps were a luxury unthought of at that period, and it was only when the man stepped forward to grasp the boy again that the rescuer got a glimpse of his face.

They were standing near a chandlery shop, and when the man moved forward he came into the light streaming through the shop window.

The person in the great-coat started on seeing that face, and, with a sarcastic laugh, asked:

"And so you are this lad's father?"

"Yes, I am!" sullenly.

This doggedly uttered assertion did not appear to convince the boy's rescuer, who, with the same sarcastic laugh, stepped into the light, saying:

"Smith, Smith, what a lying scoundrel you are!"

The man thus addressed started back in alarm.

"Darrell!" he exclaimed, in utter amaze.

"Darrell Dare, if you please."

Smith did not speak. He seemed to stand in fear of Dare, and shrunk back out of the light, while the other stood looking at him for a moment in silent contempt.

"This unfortunate lad is, of course, your son just as much as I was once your nephew! Is it not so?"

Smith muttered an inaudible reply, and Dare continued:

"Be off, you scoundrel! Be off, before I run you through, as you deserve!" and the young man laid his hand on his sword-hilt as he spoke—exposing the undress uniform of a naval officer.

Smith slunk away, abashed, but with a vicious look on his sinister face.

"Come, my lad," said the officer, taking the boy by the hand.

"Good heavens! Why, you must be freezing!" he exclaimed, as the boy's shivering hand touched his own.

He led the way into the chandlery shop, where he was greeted with a respectful:

"Stormy night, captain!"

"Very stormy indeed, Mr. Brown. Please give this lad a pair of gloves—something good and warm."

Captain Dare, notwithstanding the title, was a young man—much younger than he looked.

Tall, finely—magnificently formed and handsome, the heavy, tawny mustache adorning his

upper lip helped to give him the appearance of twenty-eight or thirty, while in reality he was barely twenty-one.

The boy was about fifteen years of age, with a frank, open countenance and honest, fearless blue eyes, that won the captain's pity and liking at once.

So, when Mr. Brown, having fitted on the gloves, looked significantly at the lad's tattered shoes and clothes, and said:

"Anything else, captain?"

He nodded, saying:

"Yes, you may as well make it an entire outfit, seeing how it's needed."

Mr. Brown, who could supply anything from a needle to an anchor, soon had the lad neatly and warmly clad "from top to toe," as he expressed it.

"Worse off than I was, when I first reached here," mused the captain, pityingly, as he watched the boy being dressed.

"What shall I do with him?" was his next thought, and calling Mr. Brown aside, he arranged for the boy's care for the night.

"I will see what can be done for him when I get home," decided the young officer. "Meantime, give him a hot supper and take good care of him until I call to-morrow."

"Now, my lad," he continued, turning to the boy, "Mr. Brown will take good care of you for the present. What is your name?"

"James Lawrence, sir, but I was generally called Laurie, to distinguish me from my cousin of the same name. He lived with us for a while, and the name stuck to me."

Captain Dare was interested, but he was also in a hurry to get home.

"Well, Laurie, be a good boy, and we'll see what can be done for you. I'm in a great hurry now, or I should stay and hear your story."

"I don't know how to thank you, sir—" began the boy, as the captain bade him good-night.

"And therefore, being a sensible lad, you will not try," laughed the captain, adding earnestly:

"It's deeds, deeds, not words, that the world respects!" and with a hasty "good-night" to Mr. Brown, he left the store.

The streets were deserted, even in the lower part of the city, and Captain Dare had a long, lonesome and difficult journey to make before reaching his destination, which was in what was then called the "Out-ward."

At length the captain reached the handsome residence of Captain King, of the then young United States Navy, and was warmly received by all, and lovingly by one—Emily King.

Emily—Captain King's sister—was a beautiful girl of seventeen, and engaged to be married to Captain Dare in the following autumn.

"How late you are! What detained you?" she asked.

"Oh, I met an old acquaintance—had quite a little adventure," replied Dare, and he proceeded to relate the story of his meeting with Smith.

"So he's still in the land of the living?" said Captain King, adding:

"I wonder who the boy is?"

"I will try to find out to-morrow. I'm interested in the lad, for his situation reminds me strongly of my own when I first met—"

Captain Dare paused and looked significantly at Emily, causing her to blush, and every one else to smile.

"I have heard some interesting news to-day," he continued. "There is an expedition fitting out—or about to—against the Algerian pirates. They've been doing pretty much as they pleased with every nation since Barbarossa, the famous Turkish pirate, started them in the business in 1516."

"Yes, they've never been thoroughly thrashed yet," assented Captain King, while the ladies began to look interested and apprehensive.

"No; but they will be, this time," returned Dare, proudly. "Think of that pirate king—fof, after murdering the native prince, he had himself proclaimed king—think of him having 30,000 Christian slaves at work for three years, building a mole to protect his ships!"

"Well?" said Captain King, who guessed what was coming.

"Well, they've seized some of our ships, and we're going to teach them a lesson they won't forget in a hurry. I have asked to be appointed to the United States."

"Darrell!" cried Emily, reproachfully, and betraying alarm.

"Hold on now, Emily. Let me explain why I did so. You know I'm only 'captain' by courtesy, so to speak. The fact of my being

owner of The Hawk procured for me the rank of captain, but I am really nothing more than a lieutenant, on the Government lists. In this affair, I may have an opportunity to really win the title which I now wrongfully bear."

"Come, come, Darrell! not as bad as that!" interposed his friend, warmly. "You won the rank, and would have got it if you were not already a captain, after the last cruise. You are talking sheer nonsense."

"Perhaps. Still, I didn't get it—I wasn't in a position to get it," returned the other, quietly, and on the plea that he had several letters to write, he sought the library.

Here he was quickly joined by Emily.

What he said, and how, has no bearing on this story, but, eventually, Captain Dare succeeded in quelling her fears as to the dangers to which he would be exposed if appointed an officer of the expedition.

"For, you know, I'm not appointed yet," he said, in conclusion.

"And I shall pray that you may not be!" was the prompt rejoinder.

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE FRIGATE.

NEXT day Captain Dare called at the chandlery shop, where he found Laurie looking quite happy and at home.

"Now tell me how you came to be with Smith," said the captain, and the boy told his story.

His father, who was captain of a merchant-man, had left port nearly ten years prior to the opening of our story, and had never been heard from again.

Mrs. Lawrence had a little money, but this was soon exhausted, and, step by step, they drifted downward, until at length, worn out by the struggle for existence, the good mother died.

"That was only two months ago," continued Laurie, his tears beginning to flow, "and then Mr. Smith said he'd take care of me."

"And how did he do it?"

"He wanted me to beg and steal, and because I wouldn't do it he would beat and starve me until I'd beg for him. Then he'd ask me again to steal—so I ran away from him the first time I got a chance, but he caught me last night."

"No mystery about this," thought the young captain. "Nobody paid to have this boy put out of the way as was my case," and aloud:

"Well, you can stay here for the present. As soon as my own affairs are settled, we will see what can be done for you, my lad."

To himself he said:

"If I don't get the appointment, I'll put him on The Hawk."

"Where was your mother buried?" Dare asked as he arose to go, with a vague idea of having the body removed if it was in the pauper burial-ground, as was more than likely.

"I don't know, sir!"

"Eh? You don't know?"

"No, sir. Smith promised to bring me to her grave, but he never did it."

"I was working for a grocer in Cedar street, and had to sleep in the store. I was home Sundays, and when I last saw mother she wasn't feeling very ill, but, when I came home the next Sunday morning, Smith met me at the door, and told me she was dead and buried."

"Mother didn't remember my employer's name, so they couldn't send for me when she was dying."

Tears stood in the lad's eyes, and it was with an effort he continued:

"Smith hired a room from mother and that helped us, and he knew all about our troubles, so when the man I worked for got drunk and discharged me, two days afterward, I was glad to stay with Smith."

"Merely a thieving, begging speculation—he never would work himself," thought the captain, and aloud:

"Well, Laurie, if I run across the scoundrel I'll find out about your mother. Keep indoors as much as possible, but if he interferes with you, call on the first man you see, and send for me."

Going out, Captain Dare met Mr. Brown, to whom he said:

"Can't you give our young friend something to do for the present?"

Anxious to oblige the young but famous captain who bought all his ship's stores from him, the chandler suddenly remembered that he needed a boy, and thus the homeless, persecuted waif of yesterday, now possessed employment, a home, and at least one efficient friend.

Emily King's prayers, opposed to Captain Dare's well-known skill as a seaman, and courage as an officer, proved unavailing.

Captain Nicholson, now in command of the famous frigate, wanted just such a man for his first officer, and, as soon as Captain Dare's application was received, the appointment was made.

The Bey of Algiers had not declared war, and did not do so until June 11, 1801, but he had threatened it, and as his piratical craft then swarmed all over the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic in that vicinity, it was wisely decided to dispatch the United States at once to protect our merchantmen—and forestall the pirates.

It was the middle of March when Dare was notified of his appointment, and instructed to be ready to sail on the first of April.

This caused a commotion in the King household, and a storm in the breast of Emily, but remonstrance was useless now, and she finally submitted to the arguments of her brother and his wife, who joined Dare in combating her fears.

Captain—or as we must now call him, Lieutenant Dare—having completed his arrangements, was sauntering down-town to take a look over the good old frigate.

Passing the chandler's, he thought of Laurie, and called in.

The boy was out delivering a package, Mr. Brown told him, and then went on to say how attentive and careful Laurie was—which, of course, pleased Dare.

Proceeding to the frigate, Dare found everything in readiness to sail, and received a cordial welcome from Mr. Rogers, the second officer.

"We are really ready to sail to-morrow," said the latter, "although, of course, we will not weigh anchor for a week," adding:

"But, we do want a boy—a boy for the cabin. I suppose we must go without, though. Nobody seems anxious to send a son on such a dangerous cruise, in such a position."

"Laurie!"

The thought flashed across Lieutenant Dare's mind instantly, and he said:

"I will attend to getting the boy."

And the upshot of the matter was that Laurie became cabin-boy aboard the United States, with a fair chance of becoming a "powder monkey," or being killed, before the cruise was over.

Then came the last day ashore, and with it arrived Captain Bainbridge.

"Mr. Dare, I'm happy to have you with me!" was the fashion in which he greeted his first officer.

"A fighter from the word go!" thought Dare, as he returned the cordial grasp of the other's hand.

And any one looking at the square jaws, firm chin, determined mouth and fearless eyes of Captain Nicholson, would have surely said the same.

Next morning the entire household accompanied Lieutenant Dare to the frigate—Captain King, as he quietly acknowledged, a little envious of his friend's good fortune in getting so quickly into active service.

Then came Captain Nicholson's order to weigh anchor, the shrill piping of the boatswain's whistle, many tearful, cheerful, hearty, mournful and affectionate adieus, and the famous old frigate was again in commission, to add to her other laurels that of Corsair-Chaser.

CHAPTER III.

SINKING A PIRATE.

AS Captain Nicholson had plenty of time, he was instructed to skirt along the coast, and below as far as the Bahamas, to see that everything was clear before proceeding to London—the first port on the cruise.

The boy, Laurie, during the voyage southward, had an opportunity to become acquainted with his duties, and with those aboard the ship—and he found both pleasant.

Rough-and-ready Captain Nicholson liked him because of his parentage and his lonely condition, and the same was true of the third officer, Mr. Porter, who, up to that time, had been a captain in the merchant service.

The second officer, Mr. Rogers, liked him for himself, and because Dare was his friend, and with the midshipmen—Winters (commonly called "Little Winters"), Hull, Harper and Decatur—he was soon a general favorite.

They had just reached the vicinity of the Bahamas, when, one morning after breakfast, there came a hail from aloft.

"Who hails?" cried Dare.

"Captain of the maintop, sir. Sail ho!"

"Well, what's strange about that?"

"But I caught her hauling down the black flag, sir, and she's bearin' right down on us!"

"Phew! That alters the case entirely!" exclaimed Lieutenant Dare, and springing into the mizzen shrouds he took a survey of the stranger, which was now bearing down rapidly on the weather quarter.

"A rakish, suspicious-looking schooner, sir! Captain of the maintop saw her hauling down the Jolly Roger," reported Dare, as he descended to the deck, adding:

"Evidently takes us for a merchantman, yet."

"Well, he'll soon find out his mistake," assured Captain Nicholson, who had come on deck on hearing the hail. "Get ready to follow him!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The frigate was under working canvas only, but with the men standing ready for the command, it would not take long to put her under full sail.

"Stand by to go about, and throw out every rag!" warned the captain a couple of minutes later, as he stood watching the rapidly-approaching schooner.

It was not until the latter was within a mile of the supposed merchantman, that any signs of suspicions were shown.

"There she goes!" cried Dare, as the schooner's fore boom flew over—a sure sign of rounding to.

"Away to the tops there!" he continued. "Out with your flying jib and staysail! Away! Lively, lads, lively!"

As the boatswain's hoarse voice repeated the orders, the men were swarming into the tops and out on the bowsprit working like demons, while the frigate, in the hands of the first officer, wore around, and started in pursuit of the sea rover.

In those days, a half-dozen frigates and as many smaller vessels, composed the entire American Navy!

(England at the same period had 1,000 sail.)

On the other hand, there was a superabundance of trained officers, and this gave the puny navy one great advantage. The training and discipline of the men, and the equipment and handling of the vessels, were brought to the highest point of perfection.

The United States was no exception to the rule, and was about and in pursuit of the pirate, in less time than it would take another captain to give the necessary orders.

A stern chase is proverbially a long one. The schooner had every inch of canvas set—a perfect cloud of it—and with over a mile start, and a moderate breeze which favored her, it did not look like an easy task to overhaul her.

"She's beginning to draw away; she's got the heels of us!" warned Porter, after a few minutes.

"Oh, for a half-gale! Then we'd walk up on him!" cried the captain.

"More likely what wind there is will die away," remarked Rogers.

"I'm afraid you're right, Mr. Rogers," returned the captain. "I'd like to overhaul him without, but we'll have to bring down some of his top-hamper."

"Ho, there! Master Gunner!" and as Morris the gunner came forward, the commander continued:

"See what you can do with that fellow's spars!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The gun was carefully sighted, there was a moment of suspense, then snap! went the lint-stock, and as the smoke cleared away anxious eyes were bent on the flying schooner.

She was to all appearances uninjured.

"Again!" cried captain, promptly.

"She rolled just as I fired," muttered Morris.

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

Two reports rung out simultaneously—the pirate was "talking back"—and the shots did about equal damage.

The frigate's foretopmast was cut almost clean away, while the schooner's maintop suffered in like manner.

Leaving Rogers to attend to the clearing away of the wreckage, Captain Nicholson watched the progress of the duel between his bow gun and the pirate's stern chaser.

Again and again the dull boom of the guns caused both sides to look anxiously at their light spars. Men then amounted to nothing in comparison with topmasts and yards!

But, aside from the unpleasantly close whistling of an occasional cannon ball, no trouble

was caused by this running fire, and Captain Nicholson became impatient.

"Morris, Morris!" he cried. "Your eye must be getting dim! Can't you do anything with her?"

"She's rolling so—but I'll smash her stern if ye like!" growled the gunner.

"Well, do something—anything—quick, for God's sake!"

Instead of dying away, as was feared, the wind had increased quite a little, causing the schooner to roll enough to make her spars a difficult mark.

Morris's offer, therefore, was rather sarcastic, for the small, shapely stern of the low-lying schooner was more difficult to hit than her spars, but, averting his head to hide a grin, he answered, cheerily enough:

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Boom!"

Scarcely had the report of the bow gun died away, when the schooner flew up in the wind, regardless of her helm.

"What the dickens is the matter? What have you done, Morris?" asked the captain.

"Looks as if their steering-gear was smashed," Dare remarked, delighted with old Morris's work.

And he was right. As Morris pulled the lint-stock the schooner pitched forward, bringing up her stern, and the solid shot hit the stern-post full and fair, smashing it and breaking all connection with the wheel, rendering her unmanageable.

This, of course, could be remedied in time—but there was no time, at that crisis.

The wind was freshening every minute, and the frigate was bearing down like an avalanche, so the pirate prepared to exchange broadsides, if the opportunity was afforded him.

But he never fired a gun.

"Stand by to let go and haul! Ready there to check head-braces!" shouted Dare, as the frigate neared the schooner.

He intended to cross the pirate's stern, which would enable him to deliver a raking broadside without danger to himself.

The frigate, tearing through the water in an eight-knot breeze, was soon at the desired point.

"Helm's a-lee! Let go—haul—check head-braces!" ordered Dare, through his trumpet, while Morris stood ready to pour in his broadside.

"Hard up! Hard up!" thundered Dare, the next moment—but it was too late!

As the frigate wore around, and, gathering headway, shot ahead to cross the stern of the schooner, a sudden change of wind threw the latter around—broadside on to the United States.

There was a moment of horrible, breathless suspense.

Cries of rage, defiance and despair arose from the crowded decks of the doomed schooner.

Now only a wave separates the two vessels!

And now, down comes the frigate upon the pirate craft, striking her right amidships!

The noble vessel scarcely felt the shock as she rode over the low waist, and crashed through the rigging of the doomed buccaneer.

It was an appalling catastrophe—a terrible sea tragedy, that, for a few moments, held all aboard the American frigate spellbound.

Though the enemy had been a sea freebooter and ocean wolf, the brave hearts on the gallant old United States sickened at the sight.

The pirate's doom had been awfully achieved.

"For God's sake, captain, lower the boats!" cried Lieutenant Dare, at length, gazing at the foam-covered whirlpool, where a few spars and casks, with an occasional head or a hand, were rising and sinking.

"Too late—it's all over with them now," said Nicholson, sadly; but, reconsidering his decision, the frigate was hove to and the boats were lowered.

But, as the captain had declared, it was too late, except for one man, and he was ere long brought on board unconscious.

One out of a crew of one hundred!

"And now for London town!" exclaimed Captain Nicholson. "We've done our business in this vicinity, I think. We'll find no more pirates to run down in these waters, at present."

"Mr. Porter, see about rigging a topsail—for it'll be a wet sheet and a flowing sea, soon."

And, ere long, the grand old ocean patrol was headed east, to give the Mediterranean corsairs a taste of her metal and a proof of the prowess of the Sons of the Young Republic.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CORSAIR'S GUNNER.

DURING the voyage to London, Laurie grew steadily in favor with officers and crew—every one, except Pompey, the cook, who looked upon him with well-founded suspicion, for, as Laurie's spirits rose, the spirit of mischief born in every boy rose with them, and Pompey suffered and suspected accordingly.

To make up for this, Laurie became an extra prime favorite with Billy Boner—one of the steward's assistants.

Billy had lost an eye, was stiff in one leg, and never tired of telling—or rather trying to tell—how these casualties had happened, but he was never able to get further than: "When I wuz down in the Spanish Main—"

The moment "Spanish Main" was uttered, something was sure to interrupt him. Either the person he was addressing would walk away, or tell him to "shut up," or he would be called. At one time he began his tale among a group of a dozen sailors. In an instant every man jack was on his feet, and with a vociferous and unanimous "Shut—up!" walked away from him.

Billy felt rather discouraged for some time after that, but Laurie's good-nature gave him strong hope—for he was determined to tell that story.

On the day following the sinking of the schooner, the survivor of the pirate crew came on deck with his head bandaged, and, in passing Laurie, favored him with a curious, puzzled stare.

Hawkins, as the pirate called himself, had been badly hurt by a falling spar, and, when he recovered consciousness, his story caused Captain Nicholson to decide to allow him to serve aboard the frigate as a gunner—for, without any indication of boastfulness, he had declared himself to be something of an expert with heavy guns.

He had served aboard a merchant ship that was attacked by the sunken pirate. The ship was captured, and learning that he had been a gunner aboard an English man-of-war, he was given the choice of serving in the same capacity on board the pirate, or of "walking the plank."

"So not wantin' to die just then, I took the job, but I never did anythin' but handle the guns—they never axed me to do anythin' else, an' many a ship's crew I've saved a-doin' of it," averred Hawkins.

"How?" asked the captain, in surprise.

"Why, by bringin' down the'r spars an' makin' 'em heave to! Ye see, if we didn't have no trouble, then the captain'd only make 'em prisoners an' sell 'em, but—"

"Sell them?" interrupted the captain. "Where under heaven could he sell a white man?"

"There's many a thousand white slaves in Algiers and Tripoli," was the quick reply.

"And do you mean to tell me that it was an Algerian pirate we sunk yesterday?"

"Yes, sir. Ye see, Red Hand's (him as was captain of the schooner)—Red Hand's wife is pretty thick with the bey, an' when she found out there was goin' t' be trouble with the United States, she gave him the hint t' begin right away; so, as it wouldn't do t' try it on in the Mediterranean without gettin' the word, Red Hand thought as how he'd try it on here, in American waters."

"And so he was an Algerian!" mused Captain Nicholson.

"Yes, sir. 'Twas him as took our ship, an' sold the captain and crew at Tripoli."

"He was the only one?" asked the interested captain.

"Yes, sir—though she may be a-comin' after him," replied Hawkins.

"What! Is the wife a pirate, too?"

"Yes, sir. Worse than him as is dead sure, by all accounts."

The story related by Hawkins carried conviction with it, and Captain Nicholson told him to report to Morris as soon as Surgeon Parkes declared him fit for duty.

Dare was on the quarter-deck when Hawkins came up from the cockpit, and observed the queer look with which the ex-pirate favored Laurie.

"Laurie! Hawkins!"

Both hurried aft at the call, and Dare asked: "Hawkins, did you ever meet or see Laurie before?"

"Laurie" was the only name by which the boy was known aboard the frigate.

"I don't know, sir," replied Hawkins, with a puzzled expression on his weather-beaten, sun-burnt countenance, adding:

"If I did, it must have been long ago—still,

his face looks sorta familiar-like. But it can't be, 'cause w'y, he's too young."

"Sail ho!" came the hail from aloft.

"Sail ho!" was echoed from the deck, and the conversation was cut short.

Dare had heard the story of the ex-slave regarding the Female Corsair, and sprung into the rigging.

"Can you make her out, Mr. Dare?" called Captain Nicholson.

"Yes, sir; that is, I don't think she's an American; she's coming up very fast, and we can soon decide."

"It is Red Hand's—Zora's!" exclaimed Hawkins, excitedly.

Laurie, passing at the moment, heard and carried the remark to Dare.

"Mr. Hawkins says it is Zora's ship—the craft of that pirate's wife."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the captain, looking in astonishment at his first officer.

"It is more than likely he is right; he knows the ship."

The strange vessel came with such rapidity that within a half-hour Dare was able to report.

"Corvette, foreign build—looks decidedly French."

"On what course?"

"He's got the starboard tacks aboard, sir."

"Has he any signals flying?"

"He has nothing—no flags, signals, or anything else."

Shortly after he made this announcement:

"It is undoubtedly Zora's ship. She's simply trying to deceive us."

"I believe you're right," returned Captain Nicholson; "back your topsail, and we'll wait for her."

When within a mile, the corsair—for such she was now regarded—apparently began to grow suspicious and edged down cautiously until within a half-mile, when she rounded to on the same tack as the United States.

The frigate now lay in a state of entire rest, without betraying the slightest interest in the movements of her hostile neighbor, it being Captain Nicholson's idea to lull the corsair into a feeling of security in attacking him.

The stranger, however, appeared more inclined to stand off than to bear down on him, and, turning to Hawkins, who had declared that Zora would fight anybody or anything, said:

"We'll touch his pride, since you think he is a man of spirit. Fire a weather gun and show our colors!"

The Union Jack was quickly hauled down, and the American flag immediately hoisted; then followed the roar of the gun. The frigate's topsail was filled, and she bore down on the corsair. The latter, however, displayed no inclination to escape, the fact being that she was actually looking for the American corsair-hunter.

The latter stood down until within musket-shot range; then Dare, who was surveying the stranger through his glass, surmised that her captain—Zora—had seen Hawkins, and had probably discovered the identity of his vessel.

"She has the modesty to carry a naked gaff in our presence," said Captain Nicholson, while standing on to board her. "You have no love for them, Hawkins; see what you can do; give them a gun."

"Ay, ay, sir!" returned the accommodating gunner.

The ex-pirate, who had coolly taken his sight while speaking, deliberately applied his match and sent what he boldly announced was a "straight-goer."

The usual moments of suspense succeeded; then the torn fragments which were scattered in the air proved that the shot had stricken the corsair's fore-topmast.

"A splendid shot!" exclaimed Dare. "You will be a credit to the service."

He was still speaking, when a succession of flashes came from the corvette, and so well directed was the volley that the iron hail passed directly across the deck of the United States.

Up to this time the weather had been fair, but was now becoming threatening, and as Captain Nicholson was standing down to board, his main-royal was carried away. The delay occasioned by this, and the accident itself, gave the pirate an opportunity to send down her light spars and prepare for the impending West India blast.

The corsair appeared as anxious to engage the frigate as the latter was to reach her, but when the United States was within a half-cable's length, the white squall parted them, the loss of her main-royal having so crippled the

noble old frigate that she could not reach the light-keeled corvette.

Zora, now driving before the blast, looked and acted as angrily disappointed as Captain Nicholson was himself, and leaning over the stern rail of her beautiful vessel, shouted her defiance to the American:

"When I meet you again, I shall sink you, or be sunk!"

The squall now burst in all its sudden fury, and prevented any reply to the challenge, but, standing on the capstan of his vessel, he returned the defiance of the female corsair with:

"I'll follow you, if necessary, to Tripoli, and I'll sink you when I reach you!"

As quickly as it came, the squall passed away, but when it had gone by, the corsair had vanished—at least as far as any hope of pursuit was concerned. As soon, however, as Captain Nicholson had replaced his main-royal, he made all sail after the Algerine, determined, if possible, to overhaul her and make good his threat.

CHAPTER V.

A WHITE SLAVE.

WHILE the United States was lying in the Thames at London, Hawkins suddenly remembered who it was that Laurie resembled. It flashed across him one evening just after supper, and jumping from the gun, he excitedly exclaimed:

"I've got it, my lad! I've got it!"

Laurie, sitting opposite on a block, looked at him in surprise.

"Got what?" he asked.

"Your face! It's my old captain—him as was in command of the Flying Scud when she was took by Red Hand—that ye reminded me of, an' ye do look uncommon like him."

"Why, that was the name of my father's ship!" cried Laurie.

"But it was Captain Lawrence—"

"Yes, yes—I know!" interrupted the excited boy. "How long ago was it captured? Is—is he still alive?"

"But it was Captain—" began Hawkins, again.

"Haven't I told you I know all that! My name is Lawrence, but they call me Laurie—every one does."

Laurie had sprung up at the mention of the Flying Scud, and stood looking with eager expectancy at the old gunner.

The latter was too astonished to reply, and Laurie grew impatient.

"Can't you speak?" he cried.

"Yes, sir, but you knocked me all of a heap," replied Hawkins.

"The Flying Scud was took 'bout ten year ago in the Mediterranean. There was only a small crew, and no arms of any account, so they had no trouble."

"As t' whether Cap'n Lawrence is alive—I can't say. Him 'n' the rest was took to Tripoli t' be sold for slaves."

"Cap'n Lawrence was a fine sailor, 'n' well eddicated, 'n' mebbe he was put at some soft job. If so be he was, he's alive yit, mebbe!" That was all Hawkins could tell—all that he knew.

Laurie listened like one in a dream.

His father sold as a slave!

For a long time the boy remained silent, thinking over the strange story he had heard.

How could he find out if his father was alive?

And if he was, how secure his liberty?

"I must talk to Mr. Dare," he decided, and leaving Hawkins still wondering, sought the lieutenant.

The latter was in the cabin, conversing with the captain about their future movements, for, all the stores and water being aboard, the United States was to sail next day.

Laurie hesitated, and was about to withdraw when the captain caught sight of him.

"Come in, Laurie! What is it?"

His tone was kind and encouraging, and the boy said:

"I wanted to speak to Mr. Dare about my father."

"Your father? He's dead, is he not?" asked the captain, in surprise.

"So we believed, sir, but I have heard of him to-night, and now I believe—I hope—he is living."

With this prelude, Laurie related the story told him by Hawkins, and finished with the two questions he had asked himself:

"How can I find him, and how secure his liberty?"

Captain Nicholson (through Dare) knew Laurie's history—knew that he was poor and friendless, and therefore said nothing about ransom.

"It will be a difficult matter to ascertain where your father is," he said, "but I will do my best for you. Were it not for this trouble about the tribute money, I would go direct to Tripoli, but we cannot risk that now."

"However, I am acquainted with several English officers, and they will make inquiries. When we ascertain where he is, we will devise some means to secure his liberty."

"And if necessary, Laurie, I will ransom him," added Dare.

"I will try to deserve your kindness—your goodness!" said Laurie, as he returned to the deck.

Tears of gratitude stood in his eyes, but he knew both men too well to attempt to express his feelings in words.

"He said 'deeds, not words,'" thought the boy, "and I must show that I am worthy of their kindness."

From that hour Laurie became a different boy. Not that he was less good-natured or merry, but he began at once to study every detail connected with the management of the frigate.

This new-born interest was quickly noticed, and from the beginning the senior officers and men gave Laurie every assistance—Dare and Morris and Hawkins, in their particular departments, devoting especial care to his instruction.

Following their example, the master-at-arms took him in hand, and the result was that Laurie soon knew more than any of the midshipmen about the handling of a ship, a gun or a sword.

Of the midshipmen, "Little" Winters joked Laurie about his zeal, Decatur and Hull took the matter in earnest and encouraged him, while Harper sneered.

"The cabin-boy is getting too big for his position," he said. "Wants to become a midshipman, I'll wager."

"And why shouldn't he?" demanded fiery Decatur. "He'd easily make a better one than you!"

Harper made no response. He had already tested the strength and skill of the future captain of the E-sex and hero of Tripoli, and did not care to do so again.

Along down from London, past France and Lisbon the United States slowly made her way, always on the lookout for pirates of any description, and Algerian pirates in particular.

Then in through the Straits of Gibraltar, past Morocco and into the Mediterranean she passed.

The frigate was extra well manned, armed and provisioned, and every one on board actually spoiling for a fight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHARK AGAIN.

"A FINE lad, that Laurie!" said Captain Nicholson to Dare, the first morning after passing through the Straits.

"He is, indeed. I wish I had tried to have him appointed midshipman," returned Dare, glancing at Laurie, who was standing at the bow gun listening to Morris and Hawkins.

"He won't wait long!" declared the captain significantly, adding:

"Hello! What's that?"

"Hail from aloft, sir. Sail, ho!"

"Whereaway?" cried the captain.

"Weather beam, sir, and bearing down fast!"

"A corvette—twenty-two guns, besides her bridle ports!" cried Dare, who had sprung into the rigging with his glass and was now surveying the stranger.

"Can you make out her hull?"

"No, sir; but her spars and canvas are foreign, and she shows no colors," replied Dare.

In accordance with a suggestion of Dare, the frigate, before entering the Mediterranean, was fixed to look as little as possible like an armed cruiser, but it was plain that the stranger, if hostile, would have no hesitation about attacking her.

Accordingly, everything was put in readiness for the expected attack, although the ports were kept closed and almost all the crew were sent below.

Captain Nicholson wished to make the other begin, and therefore invited attack by appearing to be helpless.

The corvette was fast coming up, and soon was within a mile of the frigate.

"She's French all over!" averred Porter, as the stranger reduced sail, and rounded to on the same tack as the frigate.

"Yes, look at the rake of her stern," added Rogers. "See, there goes the tri-color!"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but that's Zora's ship—the one we met in the squall. She was a French corvette, but Red Hand took her a year ago an' gave her to his wife."

Every one turned in surprise to behold Hawkins on the quarter-deck, hat in hand.

"Zora's ship!"

All were surprised at the gunner's statement, and none doubted the correctness of his information.

"Why does she show French collors?" asked the captain.

"Probably a bit suspicious of our colors, sir. Wants t' make us fly the genuine article sir!"

England was then the only nation the Algerian pirates feared, and for safety American vessels in those seas generally sailed under the English flag.

To carry out his pretensions of being a merchantman, Captain Nicholson had hoisted the Union Jack when the corvette was first announced.

The pirate, however, was still suspicious, and edged down cautiously until only a half-mile separated the vessels.

Immediately after rounding to, the corvette further reduced her canvas until she was carrying about the same sail as the frigate.

"Trying her rate of sailing against ours," remarked Dare.

"You're right, sir," added Hawkins. "The Shark is a fast one, but she's just about matched this time."

Ten minutes' sailing proved Hawkins correct, as the relative positions of the vessels remained about the same.

Then, to the astonishment of those aboard the frigate, the corvette hove to.

"What's up now?" exclaimed the captain.

"Hadn't we better follow her move?" asked Dare. "It will force his hand."

"Yes, perhaps it will," replied the captain. "Square the main yards!"

The order was quickly executed, and then for several minutes the two vessels, scarcely a half-mile apart, lay rocking on the bosom of the Mediterranean.

"Looks as if she was afraid of us!" thought Rogers.

"Afraid!" exclaimed Hawkins, who remained among the officers to give any information the captain might desire. "Afraid! Beggin' your pardon, sir, Zora wouldn't be afraid if we was a line-o'-battle instead of a frigate! She's the She-terror, she is! beggin' your pardon, sir!"

"By Jove! Hawkins is right!" exclaimed the captain. "Here she comes, and there's the interesting lady herself on the quarter-deck—a good-looking terror, I should say!"

"Mr. Dare, you will look after the sailing of the ship."

"Ay, ay, sir," and giving orders to fill the main yards, Dare turned to watch the maneuvers of the pirate corvette.

Standing on the quarter-deck of the rapidly-approaching vessel, he saw through his glass a well-formed woman attired in scarlet-colored Turkish trowsers, a fez of the same color, and a short blue jacket.

Through the wide sash around her waist were thrust a Turkish saber and a pair of pistols.

Dare, watching her closely, could see that Zora was directing every movement aboard the corvette, and quickly perceived that her object was to cross the stern of the frigate, probably to rake her.

"That trick is too stale, Madame Zora!" he muttered, as he took a position near the man at the wheel.

"When I raise my hand, put your helm down—hard!" he said to the helmsman.

"Ready there, now!" he continued, as, when within two cables' length of the frigate, The Shark put her helm up, and paid off to pass under the stern of the United States.

The art of handling and fighting the old broadside frigate had been carried to a point in the little American Navy which meant almost unvarying success, and was confessedly far superior to that then practiced by any other nation.

It was, therefore, a rather derisive smile with which Dare greeted the movement of the corsair.

"Out with your jib-sheet—check head-braces!" he cried, with his hand in the air, and as the helm was put hard down, the United States was thrown up in the wind.

This forced the Algerine to exchange broadsides, which at such close range created terrible havoc among spars and rigging, as well as among officers and men.

"Little" Winters was the first of the former

to be hurt. A grapeshot struck him in the breast, and the brave little fellow, dancing about a minute before, shouting and talking to the men, staggered and fell to the deck.

Laurie leaped to his side; but, even to his inexperienced eyes, the torrent of blood pouring from the middy's breast told the tale.

"Little" Winters had seen his first and last sea fight!

Decatur joined Laurie, a moment later, and between them they carried the dying middy below.

"Laurie," he said, when they laid him down, "Laurie, they'll make you midshipman in my place. Decatur, promise to ask the captain to do it!"

"I will!" said Decatur, with tears in his eyes; "but let me go for Parkes. You'll be all right—"

"No, no!" interrupted Winters; "I'm dying—let him attend to those that—that—have a chance."

"And, Laurie, you must take my things; they'll fit you. Tell mother—you, Laurie, that—that I died in—bat—Augh!"

His head fell on his breast, and the blood poured out of his mouth.

Merry, mischievous, unselfish and brave "Little" Winters was dead!

Drawing a blanket over the body, Laurie and Decatur, both sad at heart, returned to the main deck.

Again and again Dare had forced the pirate to exchange broadsides, which, owing to the heavier metal of the frigate, proved very much to the disadvantage of the corsair.

But the destruction on both sides was terrible, the lower decks of the Algerine causing her to suffer most in men, spars and rigging, while the United States suffered most in her hull and lower spars.

Just as Laurie and Decatur came up, the corvette hauled her tattered courses on board, and, after delivering a parting volley from her small-arms, stood off ahead of the frigate.

"She's off!" cried Rogers.

"Not so!" replied Dare; "she's tired of this, and is preparing to board! She'll be round again and down on us in five minutes!"

"Ready there! All hands to repel boarders!" cried Captain Nicholson, who had explicit faith in his first officer's judgment.

"We're in bad shape for boarding," he said, looking ruefully at his tattered canvas, broken yards and splintered foremast—which seemed liable to fall at any moment.

"Yes, she's almost unmanageable," replied Dare, adding:

"And although we have already shot away a full ship's company, they outnumber us greatly yet."

At that moment the report of a gun burst from the deck of the frigate, and the captain turned angrily to see who had failed to fire in the last exchange of broadsides.

Smoke was curling from the long swivel-gun in the bows. Behind it stood the two boys, Laurie and Decatur, and beside it lay the old gunner, Hawkins.

"By Jove! There goes her foremast!" exclaimed Dare.

And the captain turned again in time to see the foremast of the corsair fall over the side, carrying with it the maintopmast and most of the crew who had been standing in the rigging.

"That ends the boarding!" cried Dare, gleefully.

"Hurrah for the gunner—whoever he was!"

Coming on deck, Laurie saw Hawkins hanging over his gun. He had been badly wounded just before the order to fire was given, but in the excitement no one had noticed it.

"Are you much hurt, Hawkins?" asked Laurie.

At first the old gunner could not speak. He kept pointing to his gun, and it was not until the corvette was bearing down on them that he understood him.

At the same moment Hawkins managed to whisper:

"The gun—Fire!"

And Laurie, with the aid of Decatur, swung the gun around, sighted, and fired—and thus probably saved the noble frigate for her work of adding glory to the Stars and Stripes!

CHAPTER VII.

A WOLF AFTER THE LAMB.

SHORTLY after the departure of the frigate United States, on her corsair cruise, Captain King received orders to report for duty, and it then became Mrs. King's turn to shed tears and utter protests.

Although Emily did not openly remind her

sister-in-law of the philosophical indifference which had been recommended on Darrel Dare's departure, and the ridicule and remonstrance which greeted her grief at their separation, she began to regain her spirits from the hour the orders arrived.

It is a sad, but notorious fact, that in the troubles of others, poor, weak humanity finds consolation for its own sorrows.

Now Emily was only human, and assisted in the preparations for her brother's departure quite cheerfully—heartlessly, Mrs. King said.

Then Captain Adams was called upon, as usual, to take up his residence in the King homestead during his nephew's absence, and, as usual, the old sea-dog entered a vigorous protest against being "thrown out of his regular course."

This included the "blasting of his top-lights" and the consigning of such holiday craft as "petticoats" to eternal perdition—all except his niece, Emily.

Having done this, the captain felt much better, and proceeded to the King homestead, arriving there in time to witness his nephew's departure.

About ten days afterward, Captain Adams, Mrs. King and Emily, attended a social gathering at the house of their nearest neighbor—a Mrs. Diamond.

It was one of those informal, really sociable affairs where people become acquainted in short order.

Among those present was a Lieutenant Vernier, an elegantly-attired, rather handsome, well-bred young man, who showered compliments and attentions upon Emily until Captain Adams growled that he had "better sheer off a bit."

This Lieutenant Vernier had tact and wisdom enough to do without appearing to notice the captain's wrath, but not until he had obtained permission to call on the Kings next day.

He flattered Mrs. King by mistaking her for Emily's sister, and the captain by his admiration of the American Navy, and his anxiety to know more about it—having been himself in the French Navy.

"Lieutenant Vernier—Vernier!—where have I heard that name before?" mused the captain, as he sat smoking his pipe before "turning in," but he went to bed without being able to answer the question.

Lieutenant Vernier called next day, and it was plain to all that he was deeply smitten with Emily, but, unfortunately, it was not equally plain that he was a thorough-paced villain.

For Lieutenant Vernier was none other than Matthew Grace, ex-midshipman of the frigate United States, ex-pirate, and (morally) murderer of his benefactor.

He had adopted his father's assumed name, and, with one hundred dollars given him by his benefactor, after the attempt to murder the latter, fled to Jamaica, where he secured a great deal of his father's blood-stained wealth.

Out of this he purchased a small, but remarkably fast and beautiful schooner, and sailed to Carthage, where he secured still more of the dead pirate's treasure, so that when he returned to New York, Grace, or rather Vernier, was enormously wealthy.

Vernier had many points in his favor. He was young, handsome, well-bred, wealthy, and last, but not least, from a feminine point of view, he was deeply in love with Emily King.

When this last fact became so glaringly apparent that it could no longer be winked at, Captain Adams called Emily to account, but quickly found that his fears for Dare's happiness were groundless.

This was demonstrated the following day, when Vernier called to offer his hand and fortune to Emily.

He was aware of her engagement to Darrel Dare from the very outset, but this did not appear to discourage his attentions—in fact, it secretly spurred him on.

What a glorious revenge it would be to steal away the promised bride of the man he hated most!

But that was not to be accomplished—at least not with Emily's consent.

"Why, Mr. Vernier, you know I am engaged to Captain Dare!" she exclaimed, in indignant surprise—"that we are to be married in October!"

"Never! I swear it!"

Vernier did not say this aloud, but he was in deadly earnest when he registered this mental vow to prevent the marriage.

In a resigned, hopeless way that betrayed nothing of the bitter, desperate determination in

his heart, Vernier acknowledged the justice of Emily's words, and thus scored the first point in his yet unformed plan to prevent her marriage to Dare.

For Emily was touched by the woe-begone expression of his countenance, and said he "must not let this interfere with their family relations," which was the precise point Vernier was trying to gain.

He was still on a friendly footing, and Emily was not of the type to mention his proposal.

As he was leaving Emily at the door, Vernier noticed a shabby-looking man on the opposite side of the road who was evidently watching for him, and he remembered having seen the man there at least once before.

With good reason to feel suspicious of any one showing the slightest interest in himself or his movements, Vernier resolved to find out who the fellow was and why he was following him.

Thrusting his hands carelessly into his pockets to assure himself that his pistols were handy, Vernier sauntered toward the river.

He was soon aware that the shabby individual was following him, and, after leading him to the loneliest part of the lonely road, turned suddenly and demanded:

"Who are you? What d'ye want?"

The low, fierce tone frightened the man, and he shrunk back.

"I've only been watchin' for a chance t' speak t' ye, Mr. Grace!" was his startling reply.

Vernier started in turn. Here was one, at any rate, who was not deceived by the change which a heavy black mustache had wrought in his appearance.

"What d'ye mean by Mr. Grace?" he asked, sternly.

"Well, don't get mad about it. Ye see, 'twas me as did the job that put you in the way of a fortune when you were only a year old. My name is Smith. My wife was old Tudor's housekeeper, n' I got her t' change you for young Dare—but it seems he got some o' the money after all."

"Yes—curse him!" said Vernier, bitterly, and then, remembering the presence of the other, asked, carelessly:

"Well, Smith, what is it you want?"

He was perfectly cool again—as a thorough-paced villain should always be—and Smith, who was elated on seeing him stirred a moment before, now looked rather sheepish.

"Well, sir, ye can see by my appearance how I'm fixed," he said, hesitatingly, "an' as I was your friend as well as your father's, I thought mebbe ye'd help me a little."

"I see you've got a fine schooner. Mebbe ye could make some use o' me there—I'm a pretty good sailor."

Vernier's right hand came out of his pocket. There was nothing to fear from this fellow, and perhaps he could use him on the schooner in some way.

As this occurred to him, an idea flashed through Vernier's brain—one that startled him, at first.

Emily, accompanied by either Captain Adams or Mrs. King, had gone sailing with him in his beautiful schooner several times.

Why not get her to go again—and not come back?

He stopped there. It was a matter to be thought over—thought over carefully.

Taking some money from his pocket, he handed it to Smith, saying:

"There's more than enough for what you need. When you get the clothes, come down to the schooner. Perhaps I can make use of you."

"Thank ye! Thank ye! I'll be there in an hour!" exclaimed Smith, astonished at the liberality of the gift.

"Don't hurry yourself," said Vernier, quietly, as he resumed his walk toward the river.

"The very man I want!" thought Vernier.

"He's got plenty of money—I must stick to him," muttered Smith.

And thus the first stone in the foundation of the plot to abduct Emily King was laid.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DASTARD DEED.

VERNIER pondered long and deeply over his scheme to abduct Emily, but aside from seizing her in the presence of Captain Adams or Mrs. King, could see no way of getting her aboard the yacht alone.

At the end of a week, he handed Smith a list of miscellaneous articles and stores, saying:

"Get those things on board as quickly and quietly as possible. We may sail at any moment this week."

Smith stared for a moment, and Vernier

continued:

"It is likely a lady will accompany us. Do you know where to find a nice colored girl to attend her?"

Smith's eyes were fairly bulging with astonishment, but he answered promptly and confidently:

"Yes, sir, I think I do."

"Well, that's one difficulty over. I wish the rest was as easy."

"Anythin' I could do, sir?"

"I don't know."

Vernier did not speak again for several minutes. Smith must know about the abduction soon, and he was thinking whether to intrust him with the secret now. Through Smith, one difficulty had already disappeared—perhaps, with two heads at work, the others would do the same.

Carelessly fingering a silver-mounted pistol, Vernier began:

"Smith, you have suggested that I should tell you something, and I've decided to do so, but if I ever have reason to suspect that you have repeated it, or are about to, I shall shoot you like a dog."

Then he told Smith of his intention to abduct Emily.

"They are rich and powerful," cautioned Smith.

"Bah! Still, I don't care to run any unnecessary risks, and how to get her aboard without Adams or Mrs. King, I can't see."

"If we went off without them and failed to return, the supposition would be that we had either run off together, or that the schooner had been sunk, which would save all further trouble."

"Why not get some lady to act as an aunt, or a sister?" suggested Smith.

"Don't be a fool! Where could you find a lady who would lend herself to such a scheme?"

"I think I know one."

"What? A lady?"

"Yes, a lady. I think I could persuade her—for a consideration."

"For you, or her?" asked Vernier, sneeringly.

"For me. She will not even know the part she is playin' in your little game."

"Good! Smith, if you manage to do that I will make you rich. Who is she? What's your plan?"

"Just this. There's a lady—no mistake about it either—over whom I can use considerable influence, but I've been holdin' off for a big stake, so you can be as liberal as you like."

"She's only a housekeeper now, but she was wealthy once, an' I'll get her t' consent t' be your aunt for a couple hours."

"What's her name?" asked Vernier, curiously.

"Mrs. Lawrence! She's a widow."

"Well, go ahead—see her!"

"Shall I make it for to-morrow afternoon—say about three? I mean for you t' be introduced, an' then you can call for the other."

"Better make it two," said Vernier, adding: "If you are sure of what you say, I'll go arrange for it now."

"Sure? Give me a hundred dollars—she may want t' buy something t' wear—an' I'll bet my head against a rotten apple!"

"Very well, Smith. Here's the money, but beware how you keep your promise!"

"Don't fear—Oh! No matter what questions you are asked, say you can't answer until you're on the schooner."

"And another thing. Don't introduce her as your aunt—just say Mrs. Lawrence."

The two villains parted, and, when they met again in the evening, each reported entire success.

"And see to the stores at once!" said Vernier.

"All right, sir."

"And if you can get a half-dozen or more good men for a voyage—say to the Bahamas—why bring 'em aboard to-night. You know the kind we want."

"Like myself," said Smith, with a hideous grin.

"Exactly."

At precisely three o'clock next day, Vernier, accompanied by a lady in deep mourning, entered the residence of Captain King.

Mrs. King had approved of Vernier's proposition to take Emily sailing with his newly arrived aunt, and regretted that an engagement would prevent her from accompanying them.

Captain Adams, who shunned female society in general, would not go, and kept out of the way when the callers were expected.

When Vernier called the previous day, still

looking sad and depressed, to invite her to go sailing, he had mentioned his aunt as Mrs. Lawrence, and Emily, therefore, took no notice when he introduced his companion simply by that name.

Mrs. Lawrence was a beautiful woman of about thirty-five, with large mournful eyes that won Emily's sympathy, but she was all ready when they called, and there was no time for talking.

Little was said on the way to the schooner, but Emily remarked that Vernier, who did most of the talking, never addressed his aunt.

At the water front, they found Smith with a small boat—so small that there was room for only one oarsman and one passenger.

Vernier looked and spoke very angry, on seeing this.

"You should have known better than bring this boat, Smith!" he said, and then to Emily:

"Please step in. I will put you aboard, and then come back for my aunt."

Emily would have objected, but Mrs. Lawrence was talking to Smith, and not wishing to interrupt her, she obeyed.

On going aboard the schooner, Vernier led Emily below to the after-cabin, where, to her surprise, she found a young colored girl.

"Dora will give you a glass of wine, while I go back for my aunt," said Vernier, and before Emily could reply, he was gone.

She noticed that the door closed after him with a peculiar click, but gave it no attention at the time.

There were two small windows in the stern of the schooner, and through these Emily could see Vernier rowing leisurely ashore.

Just as he was about to land, Dora, the colored girl, offered her a glass of iced sherry.

The day was warm, the walk to the beach—(there were no piers in the upper part of the river)—a long one, and Emily was glad to accept it.

Glancing through the window again, as she raised the glass to her lips, Emily saw Mrs. Lawrence crying and wringing her hands, apparently in great agony, and a vague feeling of fear took possession of her.

She set the glass down beside her, and watched the group ashore—not two hundred yards away.

Suddenly Vernier raised his hand, and instantly Emily heard the men raising the anchor.

What could it mean?

She had sailed often enough in Dare's cutter, lying near by, to know that this meant they were about to sail at once, and was wondering why the others did not come aboard, when she was horrified to see Smith strike Mrs. Lawrence a brutal blow in the face.

As the unfortunate woman fell, Emily uttered a piercing shriek for help and fainted.

When she recovered consciousness, Emily found Dora bending over her, and the tender, pitying expression in the colored girl's eyes gave her hope, although causing her tears to flow freely.

"Oh, what does this mean?" cried Emily, springing up.

Dora shook her head ominously, as she replied:

"I do not know—I cannot understand."

Emily's heart sunk. She half-suspected the truth, and wailed:

"For God's sake, tell me, if you know!"

"I do not know," repeated Dora, sadly, adding:

"Your husband—"

"My husband!" cried Emily, interrupting her. "I have no husband! I am not married!"

"Ah! Now I understand!" exclaimed Dora, her face lighting up. "He is a villain! Your wine must have been drugged—that was why he was angry because you did not drink it!"

"But hush! I hear him coming down. Take this—you may need it!"

With the last words, the excited girl took from her bosom a small dagger, which, together with the scabbard, she thrust into Emily's hand.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OLD SEA-DOG ON THE TRAIL.

THE footsteps descending the companionway, which had attracted Dora's attention, grew slower and slower as they approached, until at length they ceased, and raising her eyes, Emily saw Vernier standing at the entrance.

For the first time in his life, as Vernier or Grace, the abductor was not at ease, and it was with a forced smile he said:

"You have been a little frightened, Miss

King. I trust we have—that is, that you are fully recovered?"

"I shall be when you set me on shore—and I must ask you to do so at once!"

The words were firm enough, but the tone showed the speaker was frightened.

Vernier, who had been drinking to nerve himself for this interview, laughed hoarsely.

"Impossible, my dear Miss King. We are now running before a half-gale, and standing out to sea!"

"It is impossible!" gasped Emily. "You cannot be so mean, cowardly, treacherous, as to take advantage of my trust in you!"

"Go into the outer cabin, Dora," ordered Vernier, and with a significant glance at Emily, the girl obeyed.

"My dear Miss King—Emily—" began Vernier, advancing as he spoke.

"Stop! What you have to say can be said where you are!" cried Emily, clutching more tightly the dagger concealed in the folds of her dress.

Under any other circumstances, with any other person, Vernier would have laughed at the command, but his love for Emily was honest and true to a certain extent, as yet—the only honest feeling or passion he had experienced for many years, if at all.

"You can say nothing to palliate your conduct," continued Emily, as she stood confused where she had stopped him. "Take me home at once and I may forgive you."

"Never until you are my wife!" cried Vernier, coming together suddenly, and then, as the liquor began to work, he advanced again, saying:

"Come, Emily, it's no use fighting against fate. One kiss before I leave you."

"Back! Stand back, you coward!" cried Emily, raising the dagger.

He fell back a yard or two, and stood staring at her in surprise.

"Very well—you may be glad to— Never mind, you'll change your ideas before long," and turning on his heel Vernier left the cabin, while Emily sunk back almost fainting.

Half a minute later, Dora entered from the outer cabin, bearing a tray in one hand, and in the other a small carving-knife.

"Don't be afraid, miss. I would have killed him if he laid a hand on you," she said, her eyes glowing like coals of fire.

"Come, you must try to eat something," she continued, "and drink a cup o' tea. I know that ain't doctored, 'cause I made it myself."

Emily thanked her with a look of gratitude, and obeyed her injunction as far as the tea was concerned.

"Oh, you mus' eat somethin'," said Dora. "If ye don't, you'll get so weak ye won't be no 'count 'tall."

"Thank you, Dora. I'll try," said Emily with a faint, sad smile.

The cabin was neatly finished in maple and walnut, and furnished elegantly, with two curtained berths, a table, two easy-chairs and a small lounge.

A number of books stood in a rack in one corner, and on top of these Emily saw something shining, which, on examination, proved to be a silver-mounted pistol—loaded.

When the two girls retired for the night, the pistol was under Emily's pillow, and the dagger under Dora's, but they were not troubled by any one until the steward, a West Indian negro, knocked to ask if Emily would breakfast with the captain in the outer cabin.

"Not if I have any choice in the matter," was the prompt reply.

Shortly after Dora was called, and when she returned she carried a tray containing Emily's breakfast.

"He's comin' soon as you're through," said Dora.

"Very well—I can't prevent him," rejoined Emily, quite calmly.

She had the pistol in her pocket, and felt confident in her ability to protect herself. Moreover, Dora had given her some comforting information, namely, that her (Dora's) brother, full of boyish curiosity, had been hidden among the trees near the spot where Mrs. Lawrence was so brutally stricken down.

He had declared his intention of seeing the schooner sail, and must have witnessed the assault.

There was little doubt but that he would assist Mrs. Lawrence, who would undoubtedly notify Mrs. King and Captain Adams.

That the latter would pursue the schooner, was as sure as fate.

When, therefore, Vernier entered the after-cabin, he found Emily cool and confident,

instead of in tears and full of reproaches, and he looked suspiciously at Dora, to whom he said:

"You can leave us!"

"Miss King," he began, in a very respectful tone, "I trust I did not frighten you last night?"

Emily's eyes were full of scorn, but she did not reply.

Vernier had a wicked temper. He saw the scorn in her eyes and about her mouth, and his next words were in a sullen, defiant tone:

"Well—I've come to apologize. That's all I can do."

"You are forgetting that you can return me to my home."

"That I will not do until you return as my wife."

"Very well," said Emily, calmly. "Is that all you wished to say?"

Her coolness alarmed and angered him.

"You are taking things pretty easy."

The sneer accompanying the words irritated Emily, but, restraining her temper, she replied:

"Why should I not do so? My uncle is already in pursuit of you."

Vernier started, and then, with a harsh laugh, said:

"The Marguerite can show her heels to anything afloat. Besides, your dear old uncle don't know where to look for me."

"Don't be too sure of that!"

Again Vernier started, but, remembering the speed of the schooner, recovered himself.

"Granting he does know—how can he overtake us? As I told you, the Marguerite is superior in speed to anything afloat."

"Don't be too sure of that, either," said Emily sharply, adding:

"I don't think you ever tried your speed against Captain Dare's cutter. That is the fastest boat in or about New York, and remember you were watched going away, and she is now on your track."

"Your only chance to escape my uncle's vengeance is to put me ashore somewhere at once."

For a moment Emily thought he was considering the advisability of doing so, but she was wrong.

"If the cutter is armed, and I cannot get away," he said, quietly, "I'll scuttle the schooner and sink all hands."

There was no doubt of the sincerity of Vernier's horrible threat, and Emily shuddered.

Vernier, pacing the floor nervously, noticed the effect of his words.

"It is not pleasant, and I hope it will not be necessary," he said, slowly, "but, much as I love you, I would rather sink with you in my arms than surrender you to be the bride of another—and especially—that other."

"And I would rather sink to the bottom of the ocean than become your bride!" was Emily's spirited reply, adding:

"As for sinking in your arms, you can rest assured that there is no danger of my doing that."

"There's something like that cutter—you know, the one I wanted to scuttle—climbing right up on us!" said Smith, sticking his head into the cabin.

"All right! I'll be up in a minute!" replied Vernier, and turning to Emily:

"Instead of looking so joyous, you should be praying that it is not *that* cutter!"

Emily did not reply, and calling Dora from the outer cabin, Vernier locked the door leading into it. Then, with a searching glance about the cabin, he ascended to the deck, and Emily could hear the companionway-slide locked after him.

Vernier was more troubled by Emily's words than he cared to acknowledge.

A strong gale had sprung up during the early part of the previous night, and he had been compelled to shorten sail, and at times heave to. His light-draught schooner would not stand it, while the deep cutter, with a half-ton of lead bolted to her keel, would derive all the benefit of the gale, which had not yet entirely subsided.

"It looks like her, sir!" said Smith, as Vernier came up.

"I'm afraid it is," replied Vernier. "Crowd on every rag she'll carry, and curse the spars!"

CHAPTER X.

ESCAPED—THE THREAT.

NOTHING but a rapid decrease in the strength of the wind saved the canvas of the Marguerite from being blown out of the bolt-ropes.

As it was, the groaning of the spars and straining of the rigging, as the schooner pitched

forward, warned them that something must give soon, but the gale was slowly dying away to a steady, strong wind.

Both vessels were laying a southwest course, bringing the wind well abeam, and as the schooner began to hold her own, hope revived in the breast of Vernier.

It might not be the cutter, after all.

It might be only a coincidence, caused by the storm, that she was steering precisely the same course as the schooner. He would soon find out.

"Lay her off a couple of points!" he said to Smith.

In a moment it was evident that the vessel astern had done the same.

"It's her, sure enough," said Smith.

Vernier shrugged his shoulders—he was hoping against hope.

"Start the sheets, and run her off to leeward a bit," he said.

Again the cutter altered her course, but now, as if to clear away all doubt, shook out her reefed mainsail and set a big staystail outside the jib.

And then the race began in real earnest.

Although the schooner spread a greater area of canvas, the cutter, sharper of build, lay a full half-point closer to the wind, and, moreover, carried an immense spread of canvas for her size.

It soon became evident to all that the cutter was slowly but surely gaining on the schooner, and Vernier ground his teeth in impotent rage.

His beautiful schooner was not the fastest boat afloat after all—and in consequence he must lose, must sacrifice his beautiful prize in the cabin.

Fully determined to carry out his threat, he was about to go below, when all at once the drag of the bellying staysail snapped the cutter's mast short off, where the bolts to which the balyard blocks were hooked went through, and down came the great mass of canvas across the forefoot.

Vernier laughed with joy.

The chase was now over, he thought, as indeed it was—for the present—for still under full sail the "Marguerite," soon disappeared from the sight of those aboard the badly-crippled cutter.

Emily had been watching the chase through the cabin window, fearful yet hopeful of the result. If the cutter overtook the schooner death was promised her, and yet she hoped—hoped it would overtake the schooner before Vernier could scuttle it.

When the accident happened the cutter, Emily's heart sunk, and then Vernier appeared, smiling.

"The fates are against you," he said.

Emily kept her eyes on the rapidly-fading cutter, making no reply, and he continued:

"It is useless fighting against fate, Emily—for I will take the privilege of calling you by your Christian name—you may as well submit gracefully as otherwise to the inevitable.

"I am rich—much richer than the richest of the merchant princes! I am young—not ugly, and I love you!

"You are here—in my power, but as safe as if at home, as far as coercion is concerned.

"But, I will cruise from shore to shore, over ocean and sea, until death do us part, before I will see you become the wife of another!"

That was Vernier sober—at his best under the influence of the nearest approach to pure affection he had ever felt. What would he be when under the influence of rum, and elated at his escape?

Emily shuddered at the thought, for Vernier now had a habit of getting drunk every night, in which he was ably aided and abetted by Smith.

Vernier noted the shudder, and with a sardonic laugh, asked:

"Are you cold?"

Emily made no reply and he continued:

"You will not be cold long. You will soon outgrow your fancy, and grow warm at the fire of my love."

"Your love!" cried Emily, scornfully. "Do you—can you associate the name of love with such base, cowardly conduct as yours?"

Vernier's evil temper was aroused, and he flushed hotly at her words.

"Be careful!" he exclaimed. "You are here in my power, to do with you as I choose. Do not try my patience too far, for I'm not possessed of much."

Emily treated his warning with a look even more scornful than her last reply, and Vernier became enraged.

"Beware! Beware!" he cried, angrily. "I have with me a man whom I own, and who has

the power to unite us. I was willing to allow you all the time you wished, but you laugh at my kindness. Now if I do not change my mind you will be married to me this very night!"

"Never! Never! No minister of God would dare perform such a ceremony—a sacrilegious mockery!"

Vernier seemed amused at Emily's vehement protest, but still angry, replied:

"Did I not tell you I owned him? Mockery or not, as you please, it is my will—my pleasure, now, that must be suited! You have rejected my kindness, and can thank yourself if you feel my power."

Turning on his heel as he finished speaking, Vernier ascended to the deck, leaving Emily a prey to emotions easier imagined than described.

"He is drinking heavily," said Dora, when she entered with Emily's dinner.

Emily trembled. It looked as though Vernier was nerving himself to go through the unholy ceremony he had threatened.

"Oh, what shall I do!" she cried, laying her hand on Dora's arm. "You will stay with me—help me! He has threatened to marry me to-night."

"I will do what I can," replied Dora.

The afternoon was passed in fear and trembling, and as night approached anxiety grew apace.

"He is still drinking. Smith and a man in black are with him!" announced Dora, as she entered with Emily's supper, the going for which was merely a pretense to ascertain what was transpiring in the outer cabin.

Pale and anxious as Emily had been, she now became deathlike, and sinking on her knees beside the lounge, with upturned, appealing face, prayed long and fervently for help.

Human aid there was none—Heaven alone could help her.

An hour elapsed, Emily pacing the floor, her fear now changed to nervous desperation, and clutching in her right hand the pistol she had found among the books, while Dora, excited and sympathetic, stood watching her.

Suddenly they heard the companionway-slide pushed back, and the voice of Vernier calling:

"Come on, come on! We can't wait all night for you!"

"He is coming—he is drunk!" said Dora, as the sound of unsteady footsteps came from the companionway.

"He is calling to the minister!" gasped Emily. "Merciful Father, protect me!"

CHAPTER XI.

BOARDERS AHOY!

ALL unconscious of Emily's peril, Dare was expressing his delight over the disabling of the pirate ship.

"Who fired? Hawkins?" asked the captain.

"I will ascertain, sir," replied Dare, going forward.

As he approached the bow gun, the lieutenant saw Surgeon Parkes bending over Hawkins, and looked his surprise. It was certainly not the old gunner who had fired the splendid shot.

"Who fired that lucky shot—you, Decatur?" he asked.

"Not I, sir—I couldn't do it!" replied the impetuous midddy, adding: "and it wasn't a lucky shot, Mr. Dare; it was Laurie's first attempt, but there was no luck about it."

"Laurie's?" exclaimed Dare, turning to the lad in pleased surprise.

"Laurie!" echoed the captain, who had followed Dare.

Decatur saw the opportunity to fulfill his dead comrade's wishes, and promptly replied:

"Yes, sir, Laurie did it! We were just coming from below after carrying down poor 'Little' Winters—he's dead—"

"Winters dead!" interrupted the captain.

"Yes, sir. He was hit with a grape-shot and only lived for a few minutes," and brushing away a tear, Decatur related how Laurie came to fire the gun, ending with the request of the dead midshipman that Laurie should fill his place.

A cheer arose from those within earshot when Decatur finished—the master gunner, Morris, being first to grasp Laurie's hand.

"Nonsense—there was no luck about it! Take the credit that's due you, lad," he said, in reply to a confused protest from Laurie.

"I haven't the power to make a midshipman of you, Laurie," said Captain Nicholson, "but you can wear the clothes and act as one, for you are as good as appointed. I'll give you an acting order."

"Hurrah! The 'old man's' a brick!" cried Decatur.

(The captain of a ship is always the "old man," be he nineteen or ninety.)

There was a general grin—and a very broad one at that—when Decatur gave vent to his feelings, for instead of going aft when he turned away after speaking to Laurie, the captain had stopped directly behind the excited midddy.

"Mr. Decatur!" he said, trying to look and speak very sternly.

"Good Lord!" gasped the midddy, as he turned and saw the captain.

The tone, the words, and the dismay pictured in Decatur's face, proved too much for even the captain, who ruined all discipline for the next five minutes by leading in the roar of laughter which followed.

"You are proving the truth of the old saw regarding listeners," said the captain, as he walked away still smiling.

Billy Boner, who, strangely enough, was busily engaged below during the fight, was the last man to hear of Laurie's promotion and was the least pleased with it.

"Just my luck!" he growled. "Now I s'pose he won't talk t' me, 'n' him the on'y one that'd listen t' me at all."

But Billy was wrong. For, although he never succeeded in telling Laurie that weird tale of his experience in the Spanish Main, there was no change in the bearing of the former cabin-boy toward either officers or seamen.

Considering the battered condition of his ship, Captain Nicholson was content to call the battle drawn, and, after making some temporary repairs in the harbor of Carthagena, put back for Lisbon, there anticipating further orders and a tender with fresh stores.

One week at Lisbon, which still bore traces of the terrible earthquake that signalized the year of the Declaration of American Independence and in which 30,000 lives were lost, sufficed to restock the frigate, and Captain Nicholson put to sea again.

"I'd like to meet that corvette again," said the captain, to Dare, as the frigate was again headed for the Straits of Gibraltar; but long before they neared the gate to the Mediterranean a terrific gale from the southwest arose, and, not wishing to risk his new spars in any way, the frigate was put about and run before the gale, keeping well out to sea.

"I want to save them until we meet that corvette again in her own waters," the captain explained, to Dare, who would have preferred to test the new spars and rigging.

But Nicholson was captain, and a captain is king aboard ship, so the United States continued to scud before the fierce sou'wester, which lasted full thirty-six hours and then departed with a final blow which snapped the frigate's main-royal mast like a pipe-stem.

Captain Nicholson was furious, and there was a sulphurous scent in the air in his vicinity for some time after, but that did not mend matters, and, finding himself well northward, he decided to run up to London for news and orders at headquarters, for our legation in London then was for European affairs.

It was a pleasant evening in June when the United States dropped anchor in the Thames River close to a brig carrying American colors.

From the moment it was first noticed the brig had excited the curiosity of those aboard the frigate—more especially that of Lieutenant Dare, who refused to believe what he saw through his glass until, as the anchor was dropped, the cheery voice of Captain King saluted him with: "You're in luck, Darrell! Come aboard as soon as possible."

Then, Dare knew that neither his eyes nor his glass had deceived him, and that, although no longer on deck, he had seen Captain Adams and Emily!

Wondering how they came to be there, he borrowed the captain's gig and, with Midshipman Laurie beside him in the stern-sheets, put off for the brig.

"You need not wait, Laurie," he said, "I've arranged to remain aboard all night," and the midddy departed, having barely missed hearing what would have been decidedly interesting to him.

"Is not that your young *protege*?" asked Captain King, after they had exchanged greetings.

"Yes. I was going to have him up for a few minutes, but to-morrow will do. And now tell me, Harry, how does it come that Emily is here?"

"Oh! So you did see them? Well, come down to where they expect to surprise you, and you'll hear a strange story."

They descended to the cabin, where Dare

And Captain Adams and Emily impatiently awaiting his arrival, and was quickly put in possession of the story of the abduction—of which the reader must now be fully informed, so we recur to the scene of trouble on Vernier's vessel.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE LAMB ESCAPED THE WOLF.

WITH a firmness born of despotism, Emily awaited the entrance of Vernier, and when he appeared all hope of mercy vanished.

He was drunk—very drunk, and greeted Emily with an ugly leer, as he stumbled into the cabin.

"B—been havin' m' last bach'lor supper," he hiccupped, pausing at the entrance.

Emily shrunk back in terrified disgust, and he staggered toward her, saying:

"Come, g—give's a kiss!"

"Stand back! Back, you wretch, or I'll fire!" cried Emily, presenting the pistol full at his head.

Vernier stopped and stared stupidly, too drunk to realize his danger if he advanced further, as he would had not another drunken idea entered his head, and he said:

"Very proper, m' dear, ver' proper. Must get mar'd first," and staggering back to the companionway, called loudly.

"Come, Tony! Tony, you drunken fool, hurry up!"

And Tony came—came the whole distance from the deck to the cabin floor at one step.

The crash with which the ex-priest—for he had taken orders—landed on the floor aroused Vernier, and finding his confederate was really unconscious and badly injured, he called some of the crew and had him removed.

"Too bad!" said Vernier with drunken gravity. "Too bad, but the marriage must be adjourned. Good-night!"

It was like a reprieve to the condemned on the scaffold, and Emily breathed a sigh of relief when she heard the slide close after Vernier.

Next morning Dora went for Emily's breakfast, which was eaten, when the former announced that there could be no marriage for the present, owing to the fact that Tony, in addition to a badly-cut head, was also the possessor of a broken arm and a sprained ankle.

This was confirmed by Vernier during the afternoon.

"Our clergyman's accident will prevent my marrying you for the present," he said, "but he will be all right soon—right enough to perform the ceremony, at any rate."

"Take care! Be warned by what happened your tool," said Emily. "It was God's mercy to an unfortunate girl that caused him to fall."

Vernier laughed derisively.

"Not so," he replied, "it was the gluttonous quantity of brandy that he drank."

During the next two days nothing was seen of Vernier, but on the third day he entered the cabin—drunk again, or nearly so.

"There's goin' t' be a storm," he said, "and after the storm a marriage. 'Tony's able t' sit up now, and as he can't come here, why we'll have t' go t' him. Mountain 'n' Mahomet, ye know."

Anything that relieved them of Vernier's presence was welcome, and the storm which now brought him back to the deck was hailed with joy—soon to be changed to terror.

Fifteen gusts of wind began to whistle through the straining rigging, as the vessel's motion increased with the rapidly-rising sea. The timbers creaked and groaned dismally, while louder and deeper rolled the thunder, following close upon vivid flashes of lightning that filled the cabin with an unearthly glare, and terrified its occupants.

Presently the rain came dashing down upon the glass skylight as though the floodgates of heaven were open, and the schooner was pitched and tossed about like a chip, while the angry seas washed over her as she lay hove to.

Both Emily and Dora were much frightened, and sat hand in hand during the entire night, but the scene on deck with the small spars and "gingerbread" work smashing, the fore-batch torn off, and all hands clinging to the life-lines, was still more terrifying.

Yet the storm, during which she momentarily expected death, proved to be the means through which Emily regained her liberty.

"I was caught in the same storm," said Captain King, taking up the story, "and was running before it when we sighted your cutter in distress. We rounded to and picked up uncle, and I then learned of Emily's abduction."

"Being bound for this port, I was, of course, going clean out of my course, but, orders or no

orders, we continued to run before the storm all night in the hopes of overhauling the scoundrel, and we did."

"Just after daybreak we sighted the schooner in a badly crippled condition and soon brought up alongside of her. Uncle John (Captain Adams), took a well-armed boat's-crew and boarded her—I couldn't trust myself—but there was no trouble, the fellow, Vernier, and an old friend of yours, Smith, being in a drunken stupor—Emily and the colored girl were brought aboard the brig, and here we are."

Dare was not greatly surprised to learn of Smith's part in the abduction—the rascal was capable of anything mean and dirty—but he had no suspicion that Vernier and his old enemy, Grace, were one and the same person.

"What became of them?" he asked, adding: "I should like to have a look at the other fellow."

"Safe in irons in the forehold," replied Captain King. "Come along."

Picking up a lantern, the captain led the way into the forehold, and, raising it above his head as they approached the starboard side, said:

"Here they are!"

But they weren't there, nor anywhere else in the hold.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN LORRIS OR LAWRENCE.

"TREACHERY, by the Eternal!" cried Captain King, as, after a hasty search, he found that his prisoners were no longer in the hold.

"When did you last see them?" asked Dare.

"Yesterday—at noon."

"Well, I imagine you are right. The irons are unlocked—not filed. Who had access to the keys—and to the prisoners?"

"There are but two keys," replied the captain, thoughtfully. "I've got one—"

He was feeling in his pocket as he spoke, and stopped short with a look of annoyance, but continued, after a few moments:

"It cannot be possible that I've lost it—and yet it must be so, for I had it this very morning in this pocket."

"Don't bother about it, Harry. It's as well they are gone, and you are lucky they didn't scuttle the ship before leaving," said Dare, quietly.

An inquiry elicited nothing, except that the steward and two of the sailors had seen the escaped prisoners while the latter were disposing of their noonday meal, and the matter was dropped.

Anxious to return to the Mediterranean, Captain Nicholson remained at London just long enough to thoroughly examine, test, strengthen and repair his spars and rigging, and, this done, announced one evening his intention of sailing next morning.

"So, of course, you will wish to spend this night aboard the brig," he continued, addressing Dare.

The latter hastened to avail himself of the implied permission, and was soon aboard the brig, where, to his delight, he learned that Captain King's mission to London had unexpectedly ended.

Emily could now return home with her brother instead of in a packet-ship, as until then it was feared she must, owing to the uncertain nature of Captain King's business in London, and Dare was correspondingly happy, for ocean travel was neither very safe nor very pleasant at the end of the eighteenth century.

A pleasant night aboard the brig, a tender parting in the early morning, and then back to his ship, where Darrel Dare, the lover of Emily King, was instantly transformed into Lieutenant Dare, first officer of the frigate United States.

Down the river, out to sea, and along the coast, again the frigate went under a strong breeze, plunging through the roaring and complaining seas until one evening the Straits of Gibraltar were reached.

Here, as the captain wished to have a look about before proceeding further, they lay to until morning, and then a strange sail was reported on the starboard bow.

It was Dare himself who discovered the stranger, and, although she was so far off that he could barely make her out through his glass, he had an impression that she was in trouble, which being communicated to the captain, caused the frigate to be headed for the stranger.

As they neared her, it was seen that her foremast was gone, and that she was otherwise in a disabled condition.

When the frigate was within a mile, the stranger threw out neutral colors, and hoisted a

whiff, half-mast down, as a signal that she was in distress.

Dare ordered the frigate kept away, and, when alongside, lowered a boat and went himself to see what assistance could be immediately rendered.

With sailors, above all others, distress is sufficient to obtain assistance. Nation or country are at once sunk in that feeling of sympathy for misfortunes which at any moment may befall themselves.

When Dare returned, he reported that the vessel was the Isle of France, bound for Calais; that she had been dismasted and badly crippled in a sudden squall, and that when her mast went over, one-half of her crew, who were on the fore-yard at the time, went with it and were drowned.

Want of men and material had prevented the rigging of an effective jury-mast, and this delayed them so long that they were short of provisions and water.

Two boats were immediately dispatched to the French ship—one containing the ship's carpenter and a number of the crew to refit the vessel, and the other provisions and water sufficient to last them for the balance of the voyage.

Laurie was in charge of the second boat, and was first to step on the deck of the stranger, where he was received by the first mate, who said:

"Captain Lorriss has just gone below to rest. He has been on deck constantly since we got into trouble, but now his mind is easy."

Laurie had no particular message for the French captain, and stayed only long enough to get the provisions out of his boat.

As he was about to return, Captain Lorriss came on deck, and gave him a message of thanks for Captain Nicholson, adding:

"Tell your captain that we are just from Morocco, and that it is rumored—and I guess it is true—that the Bey of Algiers has declared war against the United States."

"Yes, sir—thank you," said the midshipman absently. He was not paying the slightest attention to the speaker—scarcely heard what was said. His eyes were riveted on Captain Lorriss's face, and when he finished speaking the latter began to stare at the middy, in turn, but after a minute passed his hand across his brow, and turned away.

"He is nearly always that way when he meets an American," said the first mate, who had been quietly watching Laurie and the captain, adding:

"You will not forget about the war. It is almost positive that for once rumor is correct."

"I will not forget," replied Laurie, as he descended to his boat like one in a dream.

Were it not for the name, and the fact that he was a slave in Algiers when last heard of, Laurie would have felt certain that this grizzly-bearded, prematurely-aged, French captain who said "I guess," was his own father.

On returning to the frigate, the middy delivered Captain Lorriss's message.

"Just what I thought!" exclaimed Captain Nicholson. "Now, Dare, we can prepare for plenty of work. This vicinity will be swarming with the bey's ships, and the war will be used as an excuse for attacking every kind of craft, no matter what country it may belong to."

"You will make for the Mediterranean, I suppose?"

"At once, for there it will be worst. Get under way the moment the other boat returns."

Among those sent to assist in refitting the French ship was Hawkins, the ex-Algerian slave-pirate, and he looked sorely puzzled on returning to the frigate, which made sail immediately, heading for the Straits.

"Mr. Laurie," said Hawkins, at the first opportunity, "you had charge of the provisions sent the Frenchman?"

"Yes—why?"

"Did ye notice anythin' odd—familiar-like 'bout the captain? Did ye hear his name?"

"Yes," replied Laurie, answering the second question—"His name is Lorriss."

"More like t' be Lawrence!" cried Hawkins excitedly. "I got one good look at him as we passed under the storm windows, and if he ain't my old captain I'll eat me hat!"

CHAPTER XIV.

LAURIE DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.

It was just after supper, when Hawkins made the startling assertion recorded in the last chapter.

The frigate was sweeping along under full sail toward the Mediterranean, while the French

ship, bearing away to her destination, was already hull down on the horizon.

"I don't know—I cannot understand it," replied the middy dreamily. "If he is my father, why is his name Loris? Why— And yet the feeling that came over me when I met him!"

"And why shouldn't ye feel queer—meetin' yer father after so many years?"

Lieutenant Dare came along just then, and, on the impulse of the moment, Laurie told him of the French captain, his feeling regarding him, and Hawkins's assertion that he was Captain Lawrence.

"I cannot understand the change in the name," said Dare, thoughtfully, "but I am inclined to think Hawkins is right. Your own feelings are the surest indication of that."

"And now he's gone from me again!"

"Not at all, Laurie, not at all. We will stop at Calais, and can easily trace him and learn his history there. Don't feel at all put out, my lad, it's all for the best."

With a friendly pat on the shoulder, Dare left them, and, not feeling inclined to talk, Laurie went below.

He kept thinking, thinking, long into the night, and when he did sleep, remained unconscious for hours after the others turned out.

Lieutenant Dare had told the captain of Laurie's experience aboard the French ship, and when the latter failed to report, he said:

"Let the lad rest. He has probably been worrying himself all night."

Accordingly Laurie slept until awakened by the dull boom of a gun on the upper deck.

Springing out of his berth, he dressed hastily and ascended to the deck, but, short as the time was, the roar of the guns was now continuous, and he rightly guessed the frigate was in pursuit of a pirate.

It was Zora's ship, The Shark, which had been discovered attacking an American merchantman.

On the appearance of the frigate, the corvette hauled off, and when the merchant ship was reached she was two miles to the leeward, and increased the distance while the United States was ascertaining the condition of affairs aboard the American.

By this time, the pirate was fully four miles ahead. There was no time to be lost, and, crowding on every stitch of canvas, the frigate started in pursuit.

But, although the wind gradually increased and was thus far in their favor, as they were first benefited by it, yet as the sun went down so did their hopes descend.

At nightfall the pirate had increased her distance to seven miles. The frigate pursued, Dare watching her through his night-glass until she could no longer be distinguished.

Still their anxiety was so great that but few went to bed aboard the frigate that night. When the day broke the pirate was not to be discovered in any quarter of the horizon from the mast-head of the United States.

This was a bitter disappointment, and light, baffling winds during the whole of the next day made it more so, as they could neither continue the pursuit nor return to the American ship.

The pirate on boarding the American had seized two ladies—mother and daughter—and their maid, and the husband and father, Mr. Duncan, who had come aboard the frigate, was frantic.

Next day about noon the horizon cleared to the northward, and a slight fog in that quarter was cleared away by a strong breeze which rippled along the water.

Dare, who was on deck, noticed that the direction of the wind was precisely the reverse of the little breeze for which the sails of the frigate were trimmed, and the yards were immediately braced around to meet it.

The gust was strong, and the frigate careened over to the sudden force of it, as the top-gallant sheets and halyards were let fly by order of Rogers, who was first officer of the watch, and then the fog, which had continued rather thick to leeward, began to clear away.

As it did so, Mr. Duncan, who was standing on the quarter-deck, cried out:

"Look! There is the pirate!"

One minute's scrutiny of the hull of the vessel looming through the fog, about a quarter of a mile to the leeward of the United States, convinced Dare that Mr. Duncan was right.

And it was. The pirate, who was not quick enough in trimming her sails, now laid in irons as sailors term it, heeling over to the blast, while the frigate was running free at the rate of six knots an hour.

Forgetting for the moment that he was first officer, and not captain, Dare cried:

"Starboard your helm! All hands to board! Ste-a-dy—so! Be smart, my lads, it's the pirate! Port a little. Hurrah! She's ours—be quick!"

Within three minutes the frigate had run alongside the corvette, and when the collision took place Mr. Duncan stood beside Dare at the head of the men, bursting with impatience and desire for revenge.

Then came the cry, "Boarders away! Boarders away!" as the vessels locked yard-arms, and Dare and Duncan led the men over the side.

The boarders, led by Dare, poured over the bulwarks about midships and a desperate struggle ensued, the attacked party neither expecting, asking nor receiving quarter. It was blow for blow and death to one or both of every two combatants.

Every inch of the deck was disputed, and not one inch gained until it reeked with blood.

The encouraging cries of Dare and Duncan were answered by Zora and her gigantic Arab first officer, which had due effect upon the now infuriated pirates, who rallied round them after the first surprise had passed away.

So obstinate was the resistance, that little ground was gained even in the beginning, and when the pirates had recovered from their surprise at being boarded—they who were accustomed to board and not to be boarded—the issue became doubtful.

The pirates fell, but only to raise their arms for one last blow before death claimed them, or, if the power were denied them, seized with their teeth upon their antagonists, in their dying agonies.

Men fighting with such desperation—especially where they have the ascendancy in numbers, are anything but easy to conquer, and soon the fight came to a standstill as far as advantage was concerned.

Then Zora, in her scarlet Turkish trowsers and blue jacket, her long hair streaming down her back, flanked on either side by a gigantic Arab, began to press forward.

The boarders were now in danger of being boarded. Dare, Duncan, Rogers and Porter performed prodigies, in their endeavors to stem the tide of struggling humanity, now setting toward the frigate, but inch by inch they were pressed backward.

Side by side, Decatur and Laurie fought among the boarding-party—or rather on the edge of it. Fought with courage and judgment excelled by none of their comrades, as Captain Nicholson, standing on his quarter-deck watching the progress of the battle, noted.

When the retreat toward the frigate began, Decatur and Laurie with a half-dozen men were driven forward, apart from the others, and brought up around the foremast, where Laurie almost fell over a long, heavy pivot-gun, and in recovering himself his hand touched it.

It was cold—stone cold.

"Decatur!" he cried. "This gun is loaded! Can you keep them off for a minute?"

Decatur grasped the situation instantly.

"Why, certainly, Laurie! There's not more than a dozen here. Maxwell, bear a hand with Laurie!"

Maxwell, the brawny captain of the maintop, jumped to the middy's side. The gun was swung round, and brought to bear on the pirates now centered around Zora.

"Out of the way, Decatur!" cried Laurie, and the frigate's men jumped aside.

Whether the gun was loaded with solid shot or grapeshot, Laurie, of course, did not know. It was more likely to be the former, but proved to be the latter, and at a distance of thirty feet the destruction was simply appalling.

"Now, lads, at them!" cried Laurie and Decatur simultaneously, and with a wild hurrah! the six men and two boys sprung aft among the pirates.

CHAPTER XV.

CAPTURE AND ESCAPE OF ZORA.

ASIDE from the fearful destruction it worked, the discharge of the pivot created a panic among the pirates, and when the little band of eight came cheering and slashing among them, the fight was practically at an end.

The first man Decatur encountered was the gigantic Arab, and for the first time the fiery middy used his pistol—and Zora's first officer fell.

Laurie, on his part, crossed swords with Zora, herself, but had scarcely done so when the idea of making her prisoner flashed across him.

"Grab her, Maxwell! Take her aboard the

frigate!" he cried, and before Zora could realize what had been said, the brawny seaman had grasped her in his arms, and was carrying her aboard the United States.

"Close up! Close up!" cried Dare, springing to the support of the little band, as the men of the frigate opened, and Maxwell and his prize passed through.

But the fight was over. Some escaped below, some fled aloft, and the balance were hacked to pieces, leaving the deck in possession of the Americans.

Mr. Duncan rushed below to seek his wife and daughter, and bursting open the cabin-door found them and the maid safe and uninjured.

The United States lost ten killed, and twenty-seven wounded, in this bitterly-contested fight, but of the pirate crew of nearly two hundred men only thirty remained uninjured—the point-blank discharge of grapeshot had killed and wounded more than the entire crew of the frigate!

Many oddly proud looks were bestowed upon Laurie, Decatur and the rest of the little party as they returned to the frigate, but almost every man aboard seemed to feel that the former in some way reflected credit upon him.

From Billy Boner to Captain Nicholson every man-jack had something to say about the two boys—for Decatur was scarcely more than a boy—and the six men.

At first, Maxwell received the lion's share of attention, but it changed when the honest giant growled:

"Stow your gab! I never thought o' sich a thing—I only obeyed orders."

"Whose orders?" asked Captain Nicholson, who, with the other officers, was paying close attention to what was going on among the men.

"Mr. Laurie's, sir! Him 'n' Mr. Decatur kept them back, while I run off wud her."

Then, Decatur came to the front for killing the gigantic Arab after firing among the pirates, and then charging them.

"Don't talk rot!" cried the fiery midshipman.

"Laurie discovered the gun! Laurie found it was loaded! Laurie fired it, and Laurie was among them as soon as I was! Now what had I to do with it?"

And then Laurie became the hero of the fight, although Decatur could not get away from his share of glory by saying that "any one able to hold a pistol could kill a giant."

Neither vessel was much injured, and Captain Nicholson determined to take the corvette into the neutral port of Carthage, which would give him time to think, for he was sorely puzzled regarding the disposition to be made of Zora, because of her sex.

Had he not felt convinced that the captain of the Isle of France was Laurie's father, he would have offered her to the Bey of Algiers in exchange for Captain Lawrence, but it seemed certain that the latter had in some way been released from slavery.

Accordingly, putting a prize crew aboard the corvette, Captain Nicholson set sail for Carthage, much pleased over the victory, but not at all pleased with Dare for taking the fight off his hands.

A born fighter himself, he would have much preferred being in the thick of the fight, to witnessing it.

For twenty-four hours Laurie was confined to his berth with a bad cut in the right leg, received from a knife in the hands of a dying pirate.

When he limped up on deck, he was praised and petted until Lieutenant Porter, who was officer of the watch, interfered "to prevent them from turning the lad's head," and then he was left to himself.

He had borrowed Lieutenant Dare's glass, and shortly after beginning to use it, called to Decatur, who was passing:

"There's something away off to the windward—see if you can make it out."

Springing into the rigging, Decatur quickly climbed aloft, and surveyed the object Laurie had indicated.

"I think it's a wreck," he said, on returning to the deck, and reported the discovery to Mr. Porter, who, in turn, reported it to the captain, with the result that the frigate bore down on what proved to be a dismantled wreck.

"Better blow her up, or burn her," suggested Dare.

"Yes—she's dangerous, drifting about as she is," assented the captain, adding:

"Suppose you go aboard and do it? She looks likes an American, and you may learn something of her while on board."

A boat was lowered and Dare boarded the wreck, where he remained quite a long time (the captain thought) before firing it.

"Did you learn anything about her?" asked the captain, when he returned.

"Yes—it's the Isle of France—or what's left of her!" replied Dare, in a low tone.

"The Isle of France! What can have happened to her?"

"She was boarded by pirates yesterday. I was just in time to learn that from one of the crew, who was dying when I found him, and died before I left.

"He told me that Captain Morris and two or three others had been carried off by the pirates."

"Algerians undoubtedly!" exclaimed the captain. "And they must have passed us during the night."

"Yes—I'm sorry for Laurie," said Dare.

"It is rather rough," admitted the captain, "but don't say anything about it. When we get into Carthage, I'll send word by some of the English ships to the head devil (he meant the bey) that we'll trade this limb of his, Zora, for Captain Lawrence. If Hawkins is anywhere near right about her influence, there will be no trouble about making the exchange."

When the frigate entered port, almost the first act performed by Captain Nicholson was to seek an English captain, by whom he sent the proposition to exchange Zora for Captain Morris, and then learned for the first time that the Bey of Algiers had formally declared war against the United States.

As this meant an immediate return to patrol the Mediterranean, the men were not allowed the usual liberty to go ashore, and there were at least two officers who did not appear to appreciate their privilege to do so.

These two were Laurie and Decatur, and both being prime favorites with the crew, were warmly welcomed, when, at the suggestion of the latter that they should "go hear some good lies," they entered the crowded fore-castle.

Billy Boner had the ear of the company, and was gravely telling that he knew of a certain fiend in the North Seas that was always seen, on the eve of a hurricane, astride the bowsprit of ships containing *his* friends. He described this sociable fiend as wearing a conical hat tipped with furs, with blue flames pouring out of his hawse-holes, and there he rode on the bowsprit, leading the vessel to destruction, while waving in triumph a trident surmounted by a human skull, illuminated with red fire.

This story was received with grave approval, and Billy was encouraged to attempt to relate his Spanish Main experience.

"And now, mates," he began, "I'd like to spin ye a yarn about my 'sperience when I wuz down in the Spanish—"

At this point the usual fusillade of boots, pan-nikins, chunks of wood and a rich and varied collection of oaths and other articles were being hurled at Billy's head, when a piercing cry rung through the ship, followed a moment later by a loud splash and the cry, "Man overboard!"

"Dollars to doughnuts it's a woman overboard!" exclaimed Decatur, as he darted out of the fore-castle.

He was right. Zora was gone, and her guard lay dead on the floor with a dagger stuck in his heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RESCUE AND A CAPTURE.

SEARCH for Zora proved useless. She had many friends and countrymen in the city, and when Captain Nicholson learned of her escape he abandoned all hope of recapturing her.

"It's unfortunate—very unfortunate, but we must sail to-morrow morning," he said to Dare, adding:

"We must rely on the ransom now."

"It's our only hope, sir, and a rather slim one," returned the lieutenant. "Have you notified the English captain?"

"No—I will do so at once."

A messenger was sent accordingly, and the sudden change in the position of affairs communicated to the captain of the English ship.

Early next morning the United States weighed anchor and started back for the Mediterranean, leaving the corvette at Lisbon, for want of a crew to man her.

As she was in a neutral port, Captain Nicholson felt no anxiety about leaving the prize with only half a dozen men to take care of her, since no attempt could be made to recapture.

After cruising about for a week, a square-rigged ship, flying the Union Jack, was sighted one morning bearing toward the frigate, and, an hour later Captain Nicholson had the pleas-

ure of greeting Captain Broke—his English friend, and afterward, in 1813, determined foe.

"How did you manage to ship a crew for your prize?" asked Captain Broke, during the conversation.

"Ship a crew! I did not—couldn't get 'em."

"Well, she sailed two days after you. Your representative must have sold her."

"I suppose so," replied Captain Nicholson, thoughtfully, and much more surprised than he pretended to be.

The English ship was bound for Algiers (the town), and parted company with the frigate after passing Morocco.

Along toward evening a strong gale sprung up, and Captain Nicholson, who had been running rather close inshore for such a dangerous coast, was about to stand further out to sea, when he remembered a safe anchorage only a mile away, and, still playing the English merchantman, ran the frigate into a little cove, where he dropped anchor in safety.

It was a part of the coast which Captain Nicholson knew to be almost uninhabited, and he was therefore surprised to learn next morning that a large body of men were approaching the cove.

Laurie and Decatur, at the mast-head of the frigate surveying the country, had espied the approaching natives and, when nearer, the latter descended to say he thought there were prisoners among them.

"Slavers, by Jove!" exclaimed Dare, after a glance through his glass.

"They are either expecting a ship here, or are coming to seize this," said the captain, and turning called Hawkins.

"Yes, sir, they often ship slaves from here 'round Tripoli," said Hawkins, in reply to the captain's question.

"I'm sure they haven't seen us—although they may have got word that a ship is here," interrupted Dare.

"Very well. Take fifty men and a couple howitzers ashore, Mr. Dare. We must try to rescue the slaves. If they attack us, as I expect, you can take them in the rear," and turning to Decatur, who had been aloft again, the captain asked:

"How many, Mr. Decatur?"

"About two hundred slavers, and one hundred slaves, sir."

"Good. You can go with Mr. Dare."

"May I go, too, sir?" asked Laurie.

"Yes, I suppose you can," replied the captain, hesitatingly, half hoping that Captain Lawrence would be found among the prisoners.

The shore of the cove was well wooded, so there was no danger of the character of the frigate being discovered until the Algerians were close at hand, and a watch from the mast-head kept them posted as to the manner and locality of the approaching party.

About half a mile from the cove the slavers halted for a few minutes, and then leaving the captives with half of their number to form a camp, the balance came on toward the frigate.

Dare was notified of this, and instructed to attack the camp as soon as the guns of the ship began firing.

The frigate was lying temptingly close to the shore, and, with only a few men on deck, looked an easy prize to the hundred or more Arabs, Turks and Moors who soon appeared.

"That's some of Haji Ben Hassuna's band," said Hawkins, as the party halted, and stared in surprise at the frigate.

With a confidence inspired by the closed ports and the small number of men on deck, the slavers surveyed the frigate in a very leisurely manner, and then proceeded to pitch a camp under the trees along shore.

"They're waiting until night," said Rogers. "They know we'll have to warp her out, and they are too well armed—they think—for us to try it."

"Hawkins, you ask them what they want," said Captain Nicholson.

Hawkins did so, and this called attention to their presence aboard the frigate, which excited great surprise among the Algerians.

"They won't answer, sir," said Hawkins. "They want to know what I'm doing here, 'n' what country ship she is."

"Tell 'em it's none of their business! If they ain't out of there in two minutes, we'll open fire on them."

"We'll have to fire a gun anyhow," continued the captain, "to notify Mr. Dare to begin."

The captain's threat was greeted with derisive laughter, which quickly changed to cries of alarm and surprise as the big gun in the stern was stripped and turned on them, and a num-

ber of shots were fired by the gunner—Hawkins.

"Fire! Fire!"

The slavers were already scuttling away among the trees when the captain shouted this impatient order, but Hawkins was only waiting to get them bunched, and when he did fire, the grapeshot caught and swept off almost one-quarter of them.

Morris, from the bow, fired a moment after, and then, mingled with the cries of the wounded and dying pirates, came the report of Dare's guns.

"There go the howitzers!" cried Rogers.

"Yes, and those fellows must have heard them as well as us! Take a couple of boats and go to their assistance, Mr. Porter! Fire a broadside, Mr. Rogers, to cover the boats."

The captain's orders were quickly obeyed, and the boats' crews, having landed without loss or trouble, proceeded toward the pirate camp.

Lieutenant Dare's party had been ready for some time, awaiting the signal, and, when it came, both howitzers were fired almost instantly.

"Now, lads, forward!" cried Dare.

With a wild cheer the men dashed at the surprised pirates, carrying the camp almost without a show of resistance—the pirates flying to their horses and camels at the first volley.

They recovered, however, and came charging back after a few minutes, but by this time many of the captives were released and joined in the fight which followed, rendering numbers about equal, although the pirates had the advantage of being mounted.

For a few minutes the fighting was fast and furious, and then the slavers were joined by their comrades driven back from the cove.

This gave them the ascendancy in numbers, and Dare's party began to fall back—the guns saving them from being compelled to fly, but the well-mounted, well-armed natives seemed to have them at their mercy, when suddenly Lieutenant Porter appeared on the scene at the head of fifty men.

Laurie, directing the fire of the two guns, waited long enough to fire one, and then joined in the combined charge of Porter's and Dare's men. Again the tide of battle changed, and this time victory remained with the Americans, the slavers unable to withstand their impetuous charge, which, led by Dare, Porter, Decatur and Laurie—the two last named in the van—caused them to break and fly toward the Great Desert of the Sahara. Almost all the captives were released, but when the pursuit was over, it was found the slavers had carried off at least one prisoner—Laurie.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAURIE AS A PRISONER.

It was not until Decatur returned that Laurie's absence was noticed.

"Where is Laurie?" asked Dare, leaving the crowd of joyful ex-prisoners, who were endeavoring to thank him.

Blood was streaming down Decatur's face, one arm hung limp and useless, and his clothes were torn and dirty. He bore all the signs of a desperate fight, and the lieutenant dreaded the reply.

"Laurie, poor Laurie, was carried off on a camel."

The midshipman, who was staggering about like a drunken man, could say no more. Pursuit was useless, and with a sad heart the lieutenant gave the order to return, having placed Decatur on a litter formed of branches and boughs of the near-by trees.

Captain Nicholson was as furious as Dare, and the others were sad, and savagely demanded why pursuit was not ordered.

Was his blue-eyed, golden-haired midshipman, the pride of the frigate, and its hero on at least one occasion, to be carried off like a dog, and without an effort to save him?

The lieutenant, standing beside Decatur's cot, listened sadly and patiently to the captain's outburst, but the half-conscious midshipman defended his comrades.

"Six died before Laurie was taken," he said, protesting against the injustice to the dead.

Outside of the six men who died in the vain attempt to save Laurie, the American loss was slight, and the hundred released prisoners crowded the ship uncomfortably.

From the latter it was learned that a slave ship was expected at the cove, and Captain Nicholson determined to await her arrival.

"We may make some important captures to

offer in exchange for Laurie," he said, in talking it over with Dare, and the latter gladly agreed with him.

Meantime Laurie was being hurried toward the Great Desert, lying half-conscious across the back of a camel—the fleet-footed "Ship of the Desert."

Hour after hour passed until evening came, and then, and only then, the remnant of the slaver band halted—they had suffered too severely to do so before.

Decatur's six had not died in vain—their onslaught alone, aside from the loss the slavers had already suffered, struck terror into the hearts of their opponents.

"Little" Winters was the child of wealthy parents, and every inch of his uniform (which Laurie was wearing) was decorated with all the gold lace it was capable of bearing. This attracted the attention of the slavers, who determined to capture him, but it also insured good treatment of the captive—he must be "somebody."

When the slavers halted, and Laurie had fully recovered his senses, he found that he was not alone in his misfortune, although treated far differently to the others, for the first person his eyes fell upon was Maxwell.

Although very weak, the powerful physique of the captain of the maintop made the slavers take him prisoner, for his wounds were all superficial, and he would prove a valuable slave.

Maxwell, however, was not the only one Laurie was interested in—Captain Lorris was there, also, and between what he knew and what he felt, the young midshipman was deeply concerned about the latter.

Like Laurie, Captain Lorris was treated with great respect, being one whose capture the Algerians knew would please the bey very much.

For these two favored captives, and two others who were not rescued—the father being restrained by his inability to free his child—the supper was really fine.

The best of fatted lamb, with dates and dried fruits, and a dish of "boseen," composed the meal.

This last-mentioned dish was a preparation of flour and water kneaded into a paste, which, half-baked, was broken into small pieces and kneaded again with new milk, oil and salt, and garnished with "kakeed," or mutton, dried and salted in the highest manner.

Laurie was more than a little surprised that Captain Lorris did not appear to recognize him, although he passed his hand across his brow in the same odd fashion as at their first meeting.

From the others—Mr. Burnham and his daughter—Laurie learned that they were captured in the Mediterranean three weeks previously, but from Captain Lorris he could learn nothing—to him everything appeared to be a blank.

During the night Laurie managed to get close to Maxwell, and warned the latter to look out for the French captain, at the same time informing him of what he had learned from Hawkins, and felt himself.

"I see, sir; and I'll be on hand whenever it's wanted," said Maxwell, who fairly adored Laurie. "I can't say as I see any great resemblance, but he does look at you now and then very queer."

Next morning, still keeping well inland, the party hurried on to the City of Algiers, which, Laurie learned from Mr. Burnham, was now their destination, and on the evening of the fifth day the journey was finished.

The five prisoners were confined in the same apartment—a large room in a strong stone building overlooking the sea, and no sooner were they alone than Laurie and Maxwell began to look about them.

"We must get away before morning," said the middy, as though doing so was an every-day occurrence.

"Yes," assented Maxwell, in the same confident tone.

Their late arrival rendered it necessary to place the prisoners in a building never before used for the purpose, and, except that the usual guard stationed at the front and sides of the half-fortress knew of their capture and confinement there, they were practically unguarded, but were, of course, unaware of that.

Laurie still retained his dirk and pistol—neither were visible—and Maxwell his sheath-knife, but the iron door was too strong for either of these.

"How far down is it to the water?" asked Laurie, still poking at the lock with his dirk.

Maxwell started toward the small, open window, but it was unnecessary.

"Just forty feet," replied Captain Lorris. This exhibition of knowledge and interest startled every one.

"You know the place, sir?" inquired Laurie. "Oh, yes. It's just forty feet. But why not overpower the slave who will bring you your supper? He will be here soon, and won't be missed for some time."

At that moment footsteps were heard approaching along the stone corridor, and raising his hand warningly, Captain Lorris continued:

"You (to Maxwell) stand behind the door. When he enters shut the door and lock it. I will catch him in front and prevent any outcry. Then you can all escape—I will show you how."

All noticed that he did not appear to include himself, and the midshipman, especially, determined not to leave the man whom he believed to be his father, but there was no time for comment—the key was already grating in the lock, and the next moment, a well-armed Arab, not a slave, entered bearing a rude wooden tray.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAURIE'S ESCAPE.

As the Arab entered the room, Maxwell struck him a powerful blow, knocking him into the arms of Captain Lorris, and sending the tray to the floor, on which it fell with an alarmingly loud crash.

Stunned by Maxwell's terrific blow, the Arab was quickly choked into quietness, and then bound and gagged while the door was being locked and opened again to ascertain if the noise had been noticed.

"It's all right—come along," said Lorris, after listening a few moments, and, after relieving the unconscious Arab of his saber and a pair of pistols, led the way toward the rear of the building.

"He's getting mixed up—the rear faces on the sea," whispered Mr. Burnham to Laurie, but even as he spoke Captain Lorris proved him mistaken.

Using one of the bunch of keys taken from the Arab, he opened a small door at the rear of the corridor, revealing a dimly-lighted spiral stairway, down which he led the way.

"Now, it is likely there are several guards at this corner, and we may have to fight," said the captain on reaching the bottom, at the same time pointing to a door in the side of the building.

"But won't that bring 'em all down on us?" objected Maxwell.

"We can't help that," replied the captain coolly. "Outside that door lies a boat, and a hundred yards away a ship—English, I think. You can hardly go back now—it would be dangerous."

"Oh, no! Let us go ahead by all means," exclaimed Mr. Burnham, who was an English subject.

"How many?" asked Maxwell, nodding toward the door.

"Perhaps two—perhaps ten, it's impossible to say. They gather there on account of the sea breeze, and—"

A tremendous pounding noise above interrupted the captain, and, seizing Laurie and Jennie Burnham, he dragged them back into the shadow of the stairway. The others followed quickly, reaching the friendly shadow just as the door was thrown open, and a half-dozen guards dashed up-stairs.

"Take her in your arms, and turn to the right when you get out. Then run for the boat!"

Releasing his grasp on Jennie and Laurie as he spoke, the captain stepped softly to the partly-open door, outside of which dark forms could be seen passing to and fro.

"There are four or five between us and the boat," he whispered. "Now get ready to make a dash, and don't use pistols!"

A moment of anxious silence followed, every nerve strung to the highest tension, and then came the signal:

"Quick now!" and out they dashed among the guards, who at first mistook them for their comrades.

Maxwell's hard fist and the captain's saber disposed of two of the guards before they realized their mistake, and by that time Mr. Burnham had gained the boat—although, owing to the intense darkness, he almost missed it.

The guards now fired on the fleeing prisoners, and though harmlessly, the noise brought others, which proved nearly fatal to their hopes of escape when, as Laurie neared the boat, he stumbled and fell.

Wheeling around on the instant, Captain Lorris and Maxwell struck right and left to protect him.

"Run, Laurie! Run!" cried the latter as he knocked down the nearest guard and wrested his gun from him.

"I'm ready—come along!" responded the middy.

The boat was only a few feet away, but there were now fully a dozen guards upon the two men struggling toward it, so instead of running, Laurie went to their assistance.

His sudden appearance, and the fall of one of their number before his pistol, and the wounding of another with his dirk, created a diversion in favor of his friends.

It was only momentary, but that sufficed to enable them to gain the boat and push off, amid the shots and cries of their baffled pursuers.

Captain Lorris was last to enter, and almost upset the boat, plunging head-foremost into the bow, where he lay quite still and, for a short time, unnoticed, while the boat was being pulled out of range.

"Captain Lorris isn't hurt, is he?" asked Laurie from the stern-sheets.

"Don't know! Wait a bit!" puffed Maxwell, bending to the oars.

Lights were flashing along shore, and in their late prison, the dull boom of a gun rolled over the water, and though fired at random, the shot whistled unpleasantly close, so the midshipman was compelled to curb his impatience, for they were far from safe.

"Where can that ship be lying?" exclaimed Mr. Burnham, impatiently.

"Never mind that—stick t' yer oars! They're puttin' off after us," said Maxwell, adding:

"It'd be as well t' have yer pistols loaded, Mr. Laurie."

"Nothing to load with," replied the middy, ruefully, as he looked backward and saw several boats advancing, their location indicated by the lanterns in the bows.

The outlook was anything but promising. It looked very much like a dangerous game of hide and seek until daylight, and then recapture.

"I wish he would come to!" growled Mr. Burnham.

"Hush! Listen!" said Laurie.

His attention had been attracted by some one singing—singing as if he intended to attract attention, and never was sweeter music than conveyed in the jolly words:

"English sailors have a knack,
Haul away, yo ho, boys.
Of hauling down a Frenchman's jack,
'Gainst any odds you know, boys."

"It's the English ship!" exclaimed Mr. Burnham.

"Silence!" commanded the boy in the stern-sheets, as he brought the boat around, and the tone was so stern and manly that Maxwell grinned all the way to the ship's side.

"Ship ahoy!" hailed the middy, in a guarded tone.

"All right, my hearty!" replied the singer, in a similar tone, and a rope ladder was thrown over the side.

"Up with you!" said Laurie, and Maxwell, carrying the little girl, led the way, while the midshipman, waiting until the others were safe on deck, hung in the ladder and gave the boat a parting kick that sent it adrift.

Captain Broke was agreeably surprised to find Laurie's party aboard when he awoke next morning—especially as it included Captain Lorris, who had recovered sufficiently to take care of himself on reaching the English ship.

"There's a big boat-load of Arabs coming out!" announced the third officer, while the captain and his guests were at breakfast.

"Very well. You know how to receive them," said Captain Broke, calmly, adding:

"If necessary send for me."

A few minutes later a midshipman came to say the captain was wanted on deck.

"Don't be at all alarmed," he said, as he finished his coffee. "I'll send these fellows off pretty lively."

For a few minutes after nothing was heard below. Then the commander of the Algerians was heard angrily demanding to be allowed to search the ship, and threatening:

"If not, the guns of the fort will be opened on you, the moment we leave!"

"Indeed! And suppose you are not allowed to leave?" was the cool rejoinder, followed by:

"If that boat moves a foot, Mr. Barton, blow it out of the water! Hang your fort, sir!"

CHAPTER XIX.

DEATH OF ZORA.

CAPTAIN BROKE's order staggered the Algerian, and he began to draw in his horns, finally deciding that the British captain's word would be sufficient, but the latter was not to be caught so easily.

"No, sir," he said, firmly, "here you are, and here you stay until I'm under way. I have good reason to suspect that you are detaining English subjects, and I'm going down the coast to confirm it. If it's true, your town will pay dearly for it."

The Algerian commander protested against "the outrage," as he termed it, and declared the fort would open fire as soon as the ship began to raise anchor.

"Very good. Then, if you have any prayers to say, you'd better begin immediately," said Captain Broke, with a grim smile, and turning to his first officer, continued:

"Get under way at once, Mr. Barton. Keep that boat covered until we're outside, and stand ready to blow this gentleman from the muzzle of a gun the instant the fort opens fire!"

That ended the matter, the Algerian being allowed, after eating a goodly portion of humble pie, to send his boat ashore with a message that the escaped prisoners were not aboard the ship, and that he was going outside the harbor a short distance.

This done, Captain Broke got his ship under way, and when out of range of the fort, allowed his unwilling passenger to depart.

"Crowd on every rag, Mr. Barton—that fellow means mischief," said the captain, watching the departing Algerians.

He had heard the story of the fight at the cove, and was now heading for it, to get rid of three of his passengers before the Algerians could overtake him.

As Captain Broke did not go the full distance, and did not hear all that occurred at the cove subsequent to Laurie's capture, we will take up the story again at that point.

Late in the afternoon of the second day after the middy's capture, a vessel was sighted bearing toward the cove.

"The slaver without a doubt!" exclaimed Captain Nicholson. "Can you make her out, Mr. Dare?"

"Not quite, sir, but she looks familiar even now."

Descending from aloft a little later, Dare said:

"I'm almost positive it's the corvette we left in Carthage, but fifteen minutes will decide the question."

And it did, proving Dare correct, for when the vessel anchored off the cove just after sunset every one had recognized her as Zora's corvette, *The Shark*.

"How the deuce did she get her back?" was the question Captain Nicholson asked himself, while the other officers wondered:

"Why don't she run in?"

The last question was answered by Hawkins who said:

"She won't come in till she's signaled?"

"Then she's not likely to send in a boat—to-night at any rate!" asked Dare.

"Not likely, sir. Listen to them!"

The pirates were in a jolly mood, and were already singing and carousing.

"They've been in luck—all hands'll be three sheets in the wind before three bells," commented Hawkins.

"And, therefore, three bells (half-past nine) will be a good time to visit them," thought the lieutenant as he went to make the suggestion to the captain.

"Good idea!" exclaimed Captain Nicholson. "You may command the party instead of myself, though it's scarcely fair to give you the second chance at her—but it's your idea, so go ahead!"

"Better take all the men you can get into the four boats," he continued, as Dare thanked him and turned away to make preparations for boarding the corvette.

As Hawkins predicted, the noise aboard "*The Shark*" began to cease about nine o'clock and died away entirely before half-past nine, at which time four boats commanded by Dare, Porter, Rogers and Decatur left the frigate.

Proceeding cautiously and with muffled oars all gained the side of the corvette unnoticed and as Dare climbed up the forechains, he could not help wondering at the lack of ordinary caution shown by the pirates.

"Why, Zora, herself, must have joined in the drunken hurrah!" he muttered as he crossed the bulwarks, and saw the pirates strewn about the deck in every direction.

But he was mistaken, as a sharp report, and a sharper pain in the right shoulder, taught him almost as the thought crossed his mind.

Zora had come on deck in time to see the first of the boarders, and the report of her pistol followed by her shrill, piercing orders, quickly aroused the pirates to a sense of their danger, and when Decatur, with his sword between his teeth, climbed over the side amidships—simultaneously with Rogers on the opposite side—the parties headed by Dare and Porter were being driven back over the bows.

The appearance of Rogers's and Decatur's men caused a panic, and after a short, but desperate conflict, the pirates gave up the struggle—some fleeing aloft, some below, but most of those, who could, jumped over the side of the ship.

Toward the end of the fight, Zora came face to face with Hawkins, and with a cry like a wild beast sprung at the old gunner. Her saber struck him once but missed his head, and then, as it was raised again, a stray bullet from the rear entered her side, and the career of the favorite and fiercest commander of the Bay of Algiers was ended—amid oaths and maledictions that startled the most hardened of her hearers.

But few prisoners were taken, those who fled aloft or below thinking it as well to die there as swinging from a yard-arm, while those who jumped over the side escaped into the interior.

"Short, sharp and successful, eh?" commented Captain Nicholson, when Dare reported the capture of the corvette.

He was growing a little jealous of his gallant first officer, although the latter's success was all to his captain's credit—at home; and when Dare replied:

"Not particularly sharp. We lost only one man outright. Decatur, Hawkins and myself are the worst off of the balance," he saw his opportunity and invited the young lieutenant to the cabin.

"You have been wounded and are to be married soon, I believe!" he said, when they were seated.

Dare nodded assent. He saw what was coming.

"Well, you'll be anxious to get back then, of course, so I shall put you in command of the prize and send her home. We've got about seventy-five or a hundred of those fellows we rescued the other day, and with one or two officers they'll make a fair crew."

"Thank you—if you are through I'll call on the surgeon," said Dare very coolly, and rising from his seat left the cabin.

Next morning Captain Nicholson informed Dare that Midshipman Decatur, and Hawkins, the gunner, were the only men he could spare from the crew of the frigate.

"Three cripples and seventy-five foreign seamen!" commented the lieutenant.

"Oh, I'll see you safe into the Western Ocean," returned the captain, adding:

"You may as well start back to-day. We'll run along the coast until night and then back to the Atlantic. Between this and noon you can get things ship-shape."

Just before noon, while lying hove to, exchanging men, a sail was reported dead ahead and bearing down toward them, but as the English colors, which they soon made out, were confirmed by her hull, spars and general appearance, the work was continued.

The stranger proved to be Captain Broke's ship, which hove to and lowered a boat when close to the frigate.

"Why, that's a—that looks remarkably like Laurie and—yes, Maxwell, too!" exclaimed Captain Nicholson who was watching those getting into the boat.

"And the French captain's with them!" added Decatur, as the boat came dashing toward them.

Waiting barely long enough to get rid of the passengers, the boat hurried back to the English ship, which immediately got under way again and stood off on her course along the coast without any sign of recognition.

"What the dickens does that mean?" asked Captain Nicholson, after warmly welcoming Laurie and his companions.

"This will explain, sir," said Laurie, handing a message from Captain Broke, and tearing it open he read:

"The Algerians are in pursuit of your friends, and I must not be seen near you until they have had a chance to search my ship. Your midship-mite will explain the rest. BROKE."

"Better get the rest of your men aboard at once, Mr. Decatur," said Captain Nicholson, after reading the message.

"Mr. Rogers," he continued, "get under way as soon as the prize is ready."

"Laurie, come with me—you, too, if you please, Captain Lorris. Maxwell! Report to Mr. Dare with Mr. Decatur."

As Captain Lorris and Laurie started aft after the speaker, they met Hawkins, who uttered something like an Indian war-whoop, and, grasping the hand of the first-named, exclaimed:

"Cap'n Lawrence—by the Eternal!"

"Lawrence, Lawrence," repeated the other, dreamily.

"Sail ho!" came the hail from the mast-head at this juncture.

"Two frigates and a brig, sir, coming up fast, under full sail!" reported the lookout a minute after.

"Pirates!" muttered the captain.

And then, to the third officer, who had gone aloft:

"Can ye make them out, Mr. Porter?"

"Fairly well, sir. They're pirates, it looks go for anything, and they're showing the Bey's flag."

"Beat to quarters! Laurie, take a boat and twenty-five men aboard the corvette!" ordered the captain.

CHAPTER XX.

FATHER AND SON.

MIDSHIPMAN DECATUR, with Maxwell, Hawkins and the balance of the prize-crew had already returned to the corvette, and through them Lieutenant Dare learned of Laurie's escape with Captain Lorris.

The latter, unperceived by the middy, had crowded into the boat, and when Dare saw him—while warmly greeting Laurie—standing close by, his eyes full of painful inquiry, he stepped forward, saying:

"Allow me to congratulate you on your escape, Captain Lawrence—especially as it included the rescue of your son!"

"Lawrence! My son!" repeated the captain, with his eyes still fixed on Laurie.

Seeing them together, the lieutenant had supposed their relationship was now an established fact, but there was no time for explanation.

"We're all ready, sir, and the frigate's signaling to get under way," said Decatur, approaching the little group.

Both vessels got under way at once, the three pirates being now but two miles away and coming up rapidly, bringing the wind with them.

The corvette and the frigate were both very fast sailers, but the piratical craft being first benefited by the wind, kept gaining—the brig more than the others, until only a half-mile astern, when she began firing.

"We must get rid of that fellow—we can soon hold our own with the others," said Lieutenant Dare, and calling to Hawkins, ordered him to reply to the pirate's fire.

Up to this time the brig had treated both vessels impartially, but now her fire was concentrated on the corvette.

Hawkins had fired several times, doing considerable execution among the pirates crowding the deck of the brig, when a shot struck the mainmast of *The Shark*, splintering it and wounding several of those standing around it—among them Captain Lorris, who was severely hurt about the head.

In return for this, Morris, on the frigate, and Hawkins, on the corvette, fired and made matters more than even. The two guns were fired at almost the same moment, and the heavy shot struck the brig's foremast in the same spot within a second of each other. The first blow caused the mast to totter, and the second sent it over side, carrying with it the maintopmast.

This put an end to the annoying pursuit of the brig, and were it not for the foreign seamen forming the crew of the corvette, Captain Nicholson would have turned back, but the breeze was freshening, they more than holding their own, and he could not afford to risk his twice-won prize, so they held on their course to the Atlantic, drawing steadily away from the pirates.

When Captain Lorris fell, Laurie sprung forward, and finding him unconscious, had him borne below.

"It's not necessarily dangerous, but it may lay him up for some time," was the surgeon's verdict, adding:

"This is the second crack his skull has received within a few days—isn't it?"

"Yes—he fell head-foremost into the boat we escaped in."

"So I understand, and he looked dazed, like a man who had forgotten something. This may

set him right again—oil the works of his memory."

"Do you really think so, Mr. Parkes?" asked Laurie, eagerly.

"I have known of such cases, and would not be at all surprised if he recovered with a full recollection of what is now a blank to him. A shock caused it, and a shock is liable to cure it."

And so it proved, but it was long after the frigate and corvette parted company on the broad Atlantic, before Captain Lorris, or rather Lawrence, fully recovered his senses.

During the week he was delirious, the captain's ravings about Alice (his wife), and James (Laurie), removed all doubt as to his identity, and the surgeon warned Laurie against revealing himself to his father until the latter was strong enough to bear the shock which would be occasioned by the intelligence of his wife's decease.

"How long before we make New York?" asked Captain Lawrence, the first day he was able to get on deck.

"About a week, if we meet no dirty weather," replied Dare, who, with Decatur, had just finished taking an observation.

For two nights Captain Lawrence had spent considerable time in Dare's cabin conversing about recent as well as long-past events, treating the latter, however, as if of much the same date as the former.

Memory was returning, however, even if slowly, for when Hawkins passed and purposely avoided meeting the eyes of his former captain, the latter asked:

"Who is that man, captain?"

With well-assumed carelessness Dare replied: "He's our gunner. We got him from an Algerian pirate called 'Red Hand'—I think. His name is Hawkins."

"Hawkins! Red Hand!" exclaimed Captain Lawrence, "I know those names, and one of them only too well."

For the balance of the day the captain appeared to be buried in thought, and when evening came, Dare thought it safe, as well as a good opportunity, to introduce Laurie, who, fearing he could not control himself, had kept out of the way.

Accordingly, after supper, Dare said:

"I've never had an opportunity to hear the story of your escape, captain, but if you'll come up and smoke a cigar, I'll have Maxwell or our midshipman tell it."

To this Captain Lawrence assented even eagerly.

Maxwell was called and began to relate the story which necessarily included reference to Laurie.

"Laurie!" repeated Captain Lawrence, starting up in surprise, and speaking in tones so loud that the middy passing at the moment heard him and answered:

"Yes, sir."

"Who is he? Where did he come from?" continued the captain, as the middy came toward them.

"Wait until we go below and I'll tell you—I'd rather not say anything now," replied Dare, in a low tone, and then to Laurie:

"Sit down for a few minutes. Maxwell may forget some of his story."

Maxwell began his story again, but, though an attentive listener, the captain's interest seemed centered in Laurie, and the moment it was finished, he said:

"Shall we go below, Mr. Dare?"

"Remain here for a few minutes," said the lieutenant to Laurie, as he followed the captain. The "few minutes" lengthened into a half-hour before Dare reappeared.

"You can go below now, Laurie," he said, "he knows all, and wants you."

"My son!"

"Father!" were the mutual exclamations, as Laurie entered the cabin, and what followed is best left to the imagination.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECOND ABDUCTION PLANNED.

THE corvette was now rapidly nearing New York, and, to explain what happened when it arrived there, it is necessary to go back to the escape of Vernier and Smith from the brig while in port at London.

The escape was made through one of the steward's assistants, who had found Captain King's key to the irons and was unable to resist Vernier's gold.

Once safe in the city, a watch was set on the

brig until it sailed for home, and then they followed in a fast packet.

"I'll get her again before three months, and this time I won't be so careful as to the means," said Vernier, as he and Smith watched the departure of the brig.

He had plenty of money, and on arriving in New York purchased the fastest vessel he could find, which, at Smith's suggestion, was anchored on the Long Island shore.

"Now you find as big and as hard a crew as you can get," said Vernier.

And while Smith was engaged in this congenial task, he began watching Emily King—her habits, the hours she was wandering about the grounds, sometimes alone, but generally with Mrs. King or Captain Adams, when apt to be alone in the house, how many servants slept there at night and where located.

The result of all his investigation was either to seize Emily when on the grounds at the first opportunity, or to forcibly enter the house and seize her there as soon as Smith had completed the crew.

"I've got twenty-five men," said Smith, at the end of a week.

"Twenty-five! Why, man, I want a hundred and twenty-five—more, if you can get them!"

"To manage a schooner!" gasped Smith.

"Manage! Manage the devil! I'm going to have some of the plums to be picked out of this Algerian war."

"Now get to work quick, for we must begin our part of the war right here. As soon as you have the men, we'll arrange to seize the girl and sail."

A week after the foregoing conversation, Vernier learned from a servant of the Kings that the captain was going to Philadelphia and would be absent ten days.

"How many men have you got?" he asked Smith that night.

"Seventy-five or eighty."

"Well, that will have to do for the present. Get them aboard early to-morrow forenoon, and pick out a dozen of the best—or worst to assist you in seizing this girl."

"Assist me?" echoed Smith, in surprise.

"Yes, you! They don't know you, and if you post your men properly you will excite no suspicion. King goes to Philadelphia to-morrow morning, and she must be in my hands before that old fool Adams comes to replace him."

"If she appears on the grounds alone during the day, watch your chance to seize her and bring her aboard."

"If there is no chance during the day, it must be done to-morrow night. I have promised liberty and gold to a slave servant, who will admit you to the house and take you to her room—the rest will be an easy matter for a dozen of you."

Smith did not like the work laid out for him, and showed it by saying:

"This woman business is ugly work, captain—it's not lucky, I tell ye. You've got a fine ship and a fine crew. There's fortunes to be made in this here war. Why don't ye drop the woman part an'—"

"Shut up, you fool! I wouldn't give up that girl—if it were only for revenge on Dare—for all the gold in the world!"

"Now, no more of your chat—when I need advice, I'll ask for it. Do as I tell you, and see that you do it well. It will pay you as you perform your work."

Smith was shaking his head ominously, muttering, "It's onlucky, sure, it's onlucky," and, after a searching, suspicious glance, Vernier continued:

"Come, no croaking! Here's a hundred dollars, and when you put her on board, you shall have five hundred more."

Smith's god was the almighty dollar. His forebodings vanished as the money appeared, and grasping it eagerly, he said:

"All right, sir. Thank ye—I guess I'd better go and look up the men I'll want."

"Yes, better have everything ready."

Next morning, after Captain King's departure, there was an unusual number of men lounging about the spacious, and only partly-inclosed, grounds known as the King Homestead, and remained there all day.

When night came, these men gathered at the river, where one said:

"It's no use waitin', boys. Scatter about 'n' meet here at 'leven, sure—then we'll try the house."

At eleven o'clock thirteen men met at the river, and when one remarked the number, Smith's forebodings returned.

"It's onlucky!" he muttered, but there was no

drawing back, now, and the party started for Captain King's residence.

They traveled slowly, loitering and talking by the way, for twelve o'clock was the hour the negro was to admit them, but at length the time and place were reached, the door was opened and five of thirteen entered.

"Keep quiet!" cautioned the slave, leading the way into the parlor, where a single candle burned.

"Who goes up?" he continued.

"Me," replied Smith, in a hoarse whisper, and, in obedience to a significant gesture of the slave, began to remove his heavy boots. He was very slow about it—his heart was not in the job, and the negro grew impatient.

"You must hurry—Captain Adams may wake up!" he said, adding:

"He gets up and smokes every night at one o'clock."

"What! Is he here?" exclaimed Smith.

"H-u-sh! Yes, he came to-night. Hurry!"

"I knowed they'd be some hitch—I knowed it wuz onlucky!" muttered Smith as he stole upstairs after the negro.

"There—in there!" whispered the negro, pointing to a partly-open door on the second floor, and then pointing to another opposite:

"Captain Adams in there."

Softly pushing the door until open to the fullest extent, Smith entered the room. It was quite dark and he could barely discern the form on the bed as he moved cautiously toward it.

Suddenly there was a crash, a howl of pain, and then scream after scream rung through the house.

Smith's naked toes had struck against a low stool, knocking it over and causing him to utter an involuntary cry, and alarming the occupant of the bed.

With an angry oath, he sprung to the bedside, seized her and dashed down-stairs just as Captain Adams, pistol in hand, flung open his door and dashed after him.

As Smith reached the top of the first stairway, he could see a struggle going on below and hesitated for a moment. Then he saw a knife flash in the dim candle-light, heard a cry of agony and a voice calling to him to hurry, and he obeyed, but the momentary delay enabled Captain Adams to catch up to him.

"Ha, you scoundrel! I've got you!" cried the captain, striking at him with his pistol, while Smith, holding his unconscious burden in one arm, turned and drew his knife—using the girl as a shield.

Shouts, shots and cries of every kind began to ring through the house at the same moment.

CHAPTER XXII.

ARRIVAL OF "THE SHARK."

It was about nine o'clock at night when "The Shark" dropped anchor in New York Bay—too late to go home, Dare decided, although madly impatient to see Emily.

Captain Lawrence, Laurie and Decatur were on deck and he sought to change the current of his thoughts by conversing with them, but, at the end of an hour, the lieutenant had only succeeded in attracting the attention of the others.

"What's wrong, Mr. Dare?" asked the captain.

"I hardly know. An hour ago I was anxious to go ashore—more, I must admit, to meet Miss King, (to whom I am to be married next month) than her brother. Now, I am restless and uneasy about her, as though some danger were hanging over her—but, of course, it's all nonsense."

But, notwithstanding the last words, Dare's laugh was an uneasy one.

"I don't know about that," returned the captain, very gravely, "such a feeling as you describe has invariably proved a warning, a fore-runner, of danger to me or mine."

And then the conversation drifted off to the supernatural for a while—dreams, warnings, signs, ghosts, death-knocks, all were discussed in turn until Dare's uneasiness became very marked.

"By Jove! I can't stand it longer. I must do something!" he exclaimed, jumping up.

It was a beautiful night, though warm, and when Laurie suggested taking one of the boats and rowing up the river, the lieutenant jumped at the idea.

"The very thing! Who'll go?" he said.

Laurie and Decatur both expressed a wish to accompany him, but Captain Lawrence did not care to go.

"All right; take command of the ship, and

don't be alarmed if we are slow about returning," said Dare, and turning to Laurie, continued.

"We'll need two of the men, and as you will be the only officer in the gig, I think you should see about getting them."

Laurie smiled and sought Maxwell, now boat-swain, who, with Hawkins, gladly volunteered to make up the four oars, and within a few minutes the gig was gliding up the river.

On and on they rowed, until at length, when at the foot of the roadway running by the King homestead, Laurie noticed a vessel making preparations to sail, and they stopped to look at her.

"Rather queer time to go to sea," commented Decatur.

"Big crew, too, for her size," said Dare, adding: "What the deuce is she sending the boat for?"

The schooner was lowering a gig, and then to the surprise of the watchers lowered a big yawl, which two men in the smaller boat took in tow.

"That's a strange trick, considering the number of men she carries," said Decatur, adding:

"It looks as if she might be sending ashore for men. If it was stores both boats would be manned."

"They are heading for this point," warned Laurie, and with all his uneasiness returning with increased strength, Dare ordered the gig further inshore.

"Better carry it up under those trees," he continued, coming to a sudden determination, as they neared the shore, and beaching the gig, Maxwell and Hawkins carried it to the spot where Dare's brother had been hidden when Mrs. Lawrence was struck down by Smith.

On came the two boats until they landed at the same spot, where, after drawing them up, the men walked toward the watchers, who drew back among the trees.

"It must be nearly time for them to begin," said one, throwing himself on the grass, not ten feet away from where Dare was concealed.

"Yes—but why a dozen men should be needed to carry off one woman, I'm blest if I can see!" responded the other.

"Nor I, though these Kings have a lot of niggers. But Smith's a cowardly—"

Dare waited to hear no more. "It must be nearly time for them to begin!" and pointing the oars, led the way in silence to the roadway.

"Now, for God's sake, run!" he cried, and every one was touched by the agonized fear and anxiety expressed in his tones.

It was a full half-mile to the house—would they be in time? As he asked himself the question, Dare urged his companions to increased speed.

Half a minute after the house came into view, and, by the bright moonlight, he could see several persons in front of it.

"Thank God! We're in time!" he panted.

They were about two hundred yards from the house, and running at full speed, when he spoke, and all breathed a sigh of relief, which was followed almost instantly by exclamations of alarm, as a piercing shriek broke the stillness of the night.

Another and another followed, then came a cry of mortal agony, and then, as they dashed among the pirates, pistol-shots were heard.

Until very close to them, the men posted outside the house mistook Dare's party for some of their comrades, but on seeing their mistake fired several shots.

The three officers had their pistols, and Laurie, who alone was unincumbered with an oar, fired back as the two parties came together, bringing down a man with each shot. This, and the terrific onslaught of Decatur, Maxwell and Hawkins, who used the clubs as quarter-staves, sent Vernier's ruffians flying toward the river—those who were able.

Meantime Dare had dashed into the house. He flung the oar away and drew a pistol as he entered, firing and striking right and left among those blocking the entrance. At his heels came Laurie with reloaded pistols, and twice their echo was the death-knell of one of the ruffians, with whom Dare was now battling like an enraged lion.

Then came Decatur, Maxwell and Hawkins, and the fight below was quickly ended.

Groans were heard above, and Dare dashed up the stairs, at the top of which lay two men and a woman—one of the men groaning.

"Lights! Lights!" shouted Dare, and apparently recognizing his voice, the frightened servants brought them.

"Oh, Darrell! Are you hurt?" and as Dare started in surprise, a hand was laid on his arm.

It was Emily! and behind her was Mrs. King. Who was the woman lying on the floor?

There was no time for questioning—the others were coming up-stairs, and he said:

"Retire to your room, Emily! I will let you know as soon as we have things settled."

Then, as the servants came with the lights, he directed them to care for the unconscious woman.

"I knowed it wuz onlucky an' now I'm done for," groaned one of the prostrate men.

It was Smith, and beside him lay the old seadog, Captain Adams—just recovering consciousness.

The captain had fired as Smith turned on him; the heavy bullet crashed through the ruffian's neck, and, as he said, he was "done for."

As he fell, he struck the captain, and the latter went down also, striking his head hard against the wall.

Smith looked bitterly at Dare, but when Laurie appeared he was startled.

Addressing the lieutenant, he said:

"You've got the best of it again, but we came near gettin' her. I told Vernier it wuz onlucky—but he'll get away, curse him, while I'm done for!"

"Vernier!" exclaimed Dare.

"Yes—he's lyin' in the river waitin' for the girl—your girl—Miss King."

"But it was this woman you were carrying off—not Miss King," said Dare, pointing to the woman just recovering consciousness.

This drew attention to her, and, with a cry of wondering joy, Laurie threw himself beside the white-robed figure, crying:

"Mother! Mother!"

All stared in amazement—even Smith, who muttered:

"How did she get here?"

But he never knew, for while staring at his last victim his head fell back—his crime-stained career was ended.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

THERE was a joyful reunion between the Lawrences—father, mother and son. Mrs. Lawrence explained how Smith had procured for her the position of housekeeper in a wealthy family. What his object was was never known, but that he had one was plain from the fact that he told Mrs. Lawrence that Laurie had run away.

He had got her to accompany Vernier on the pretense that Laurie was aboard the Marguerite, and when she recovered consciousness she returned and told her story to Captain Adams, and there she had remained ever since.

The night of the attempted abduction, Emily, feeling nervous, had slept with Mrs. King, and Emily's room being the coolest and the night warm, Mrs. Lawrence had occupied it.

Julius, the footman, had been killed, but no one else was hurt, that is, none of Dare's friends, but, as Smith predicted, Vernier was warned and got away.

When Captain King returned, he was surprised and delighted to meet Dare, as was Captain Stewart, who accompanied him, and both were amazed at the story of the attempted abduction.

Then a double marriage was arranged—Captain Stewart and Miss Tudor, and Lieutenant Dare and Emily, being united at the same time.

On the same day arrived Laurie's appointment as midshipman and an order to report to Commodore Preble for immediate service. A similar order arrived for Decatur, and both were happy over the prospect of again serving together.

"Now, Laurie, we'll have a chance to pay back our Algerian friends," cried the fiery middy, little dreaming of the undying fame he was to achieve at Tripoli; and his younger, but later-to-become-famous companion, joyfully agreed with him.

But when, a month later, an order to the same effect arrived for Lieutenant Dare, it was not so joyfully received, although it did not take him from New York for another month, and then both were reconciled to the parting.

And so we must leave them—all those gallant souls literally panting for the glory to be won in the Second Algerian Expedition.

THE END.

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